

“This one is a shocker.”

— Major Spoilers

EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES **THE AVENGERS**

AARON • GARRÓN • MARESCA • CURIEL

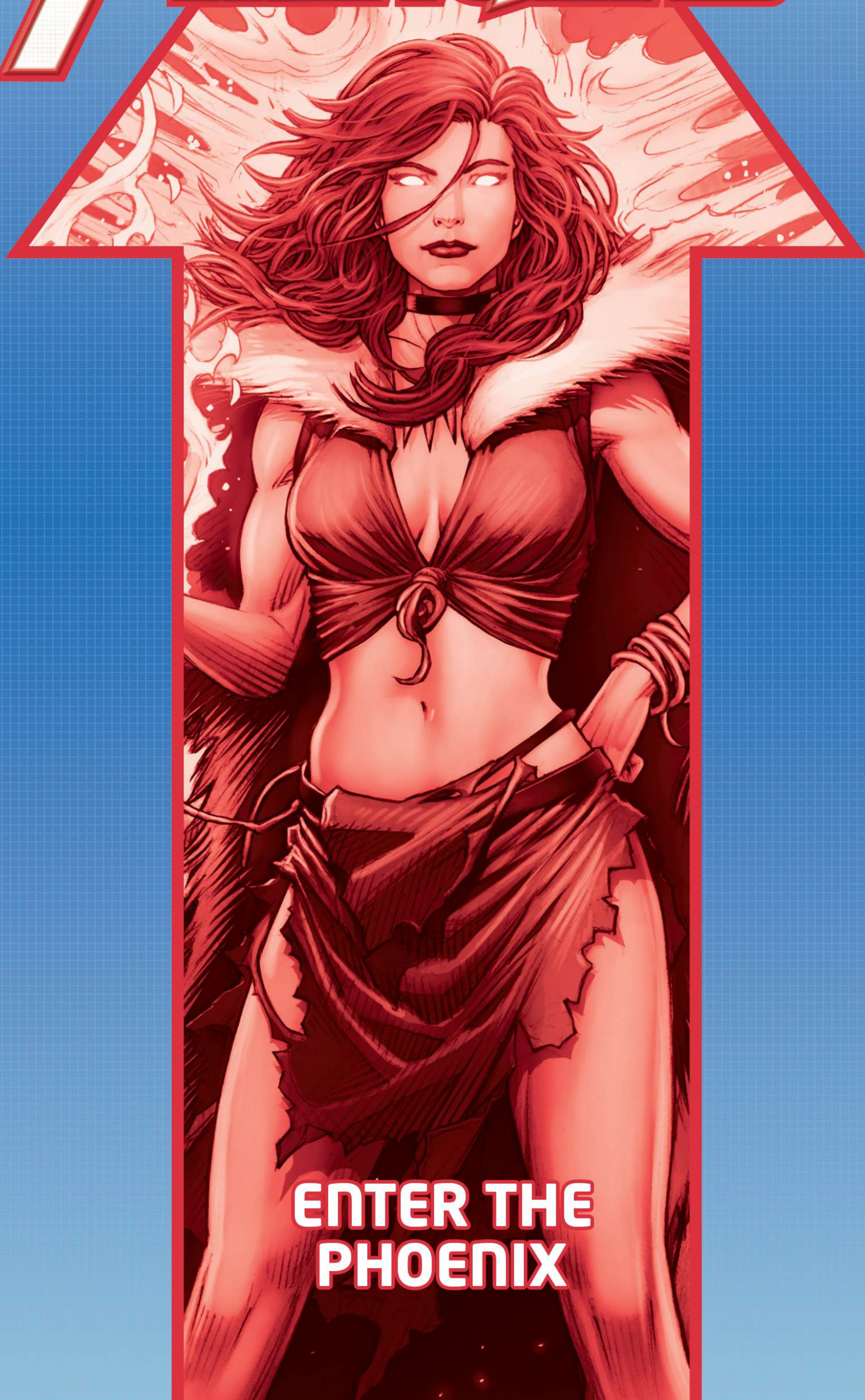


ENTER THE PHOENIX

MARVEL

EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES

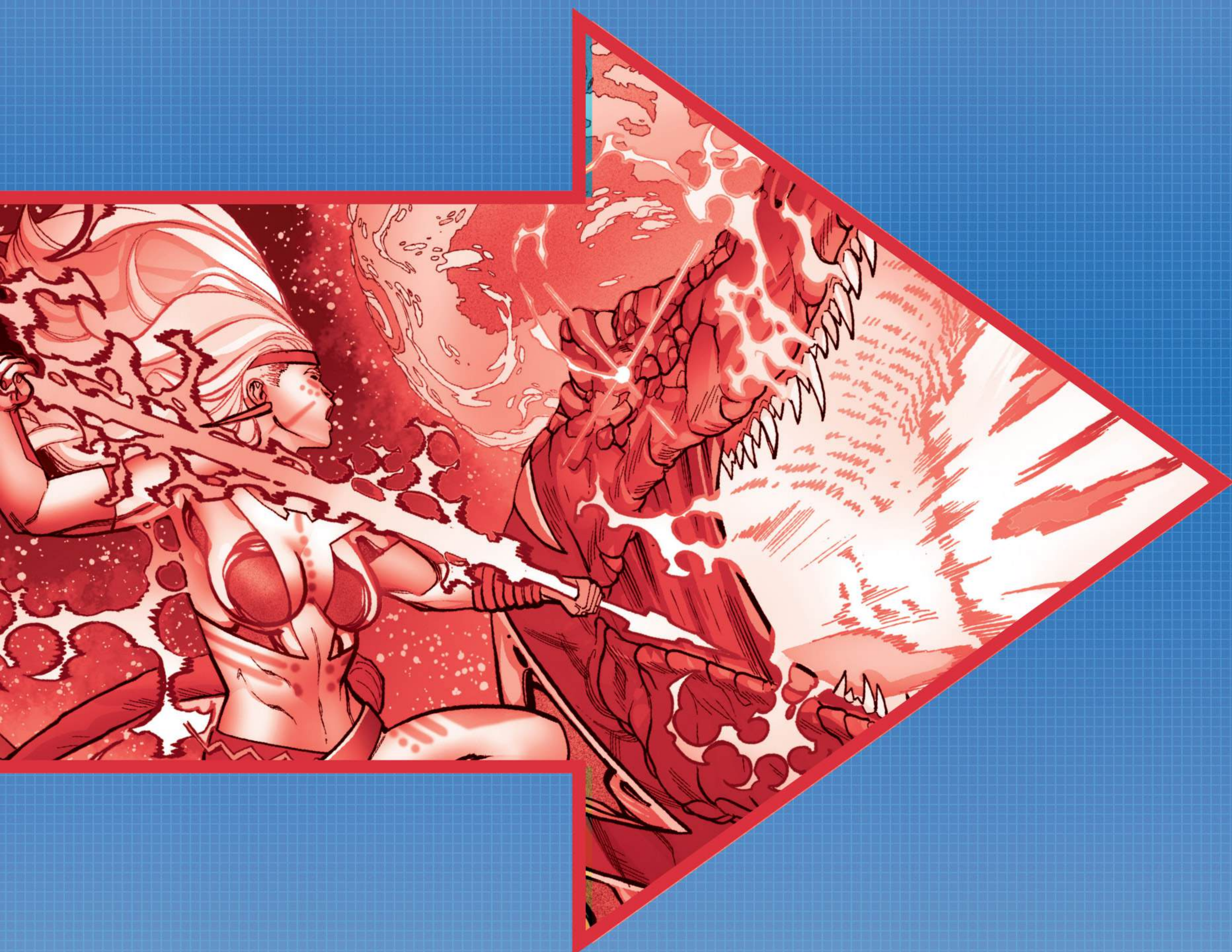
THE AVENGERS



ENTER THE
PHOENIX

AND THERE CAME A DAY, A DAY UNLIKE ANY OTHER, WHEN EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES FOUND THEMSELVES UNITED AGAINST A COMMON THREAT. ON THAT DAY, THE AVENGERS WERE BORN. TO FIGHT THE FOES NO SINGLE SUPER HERO COULD WITHSTAND.

THE FIERY COSMIC FORCE KNOWN AS THE PHOENIX HAS INHABITED COUNTLESS MORTAL HOSTS OVER THE MILLENNIA. THE PHOENIX FORCE'S HISTORY ON EARTH DATES BACK TO THE VERY DAWN OF HUMAN – AND MUTANT – LIFE, OVER ONE MILLION YEARS AGO...



EARTH'S MIGHTIEST HEROES **THE AVENGERS** ENTER THE PHOENIX

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ONE MILLION YEARS AGO.

MY FIRST
MEMORY IS
OF RUSTLING
FEATHERS.

AND
HUNGRY
EYES.



LOOKING DEEP
INTO ME. INTO
MY MARROW.

I'D ONLY JUST
BEEN BORN, BUT I
STILL REMEMBER THE
SMELL OF **DEATH**
FROM THAT DAY.

THE CHARRED, COLD
STENCH OF IT, ALL
AROUND ME.



MY FIRST
MEMORY WAS
OF THE
BURNT PLACE.





I DON'T REMEMBER MY PARENTS. I JUST KNOW THEY LEFT ME THERE, BLOODY FRESH FROM THE WOMB.

THEY THREW ME AWAY AFTER BARELY ONE LOOK AT ME.



THEY LEFT ME IN THE BURNT PLACE TO DIE.

GRRRRRNL



IN THIS RAW, PRIMORDIAL WORLD, FEAR IS THE MOST PLENTIFUL OF OUR NATURAL RESOURCES. FEAR GROWS LIKE THE FIERCEST OF WEEDS.

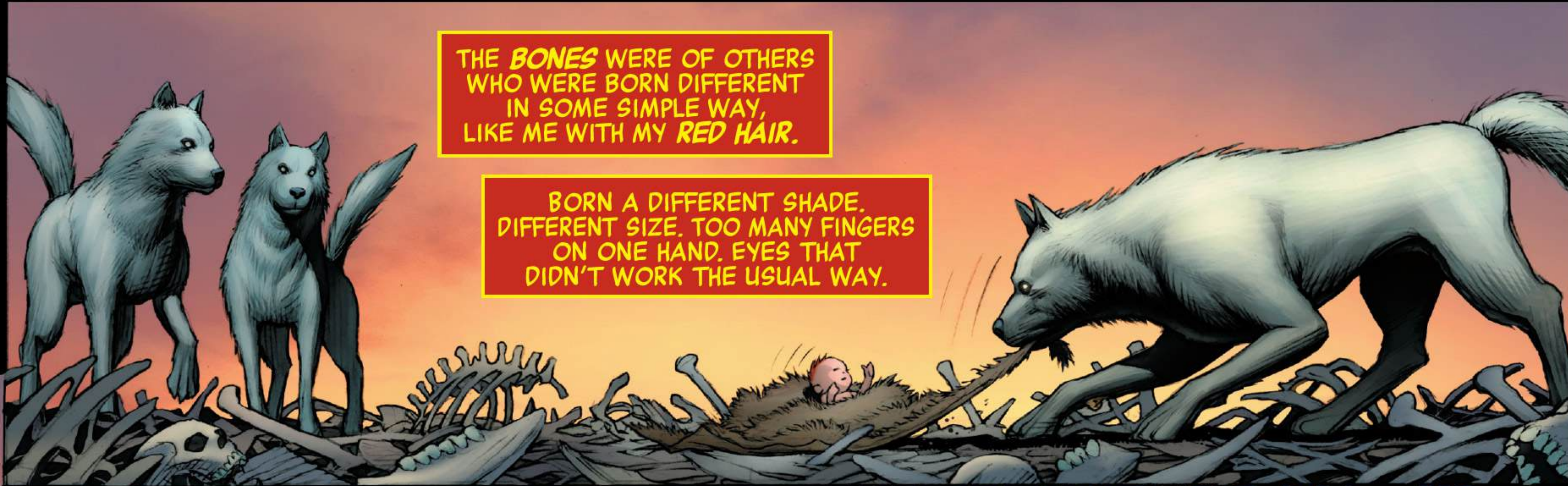
RREEEEEE

RRRWRR

CHANGE SEEMS EVER ARDUOUS, BUT FEAR ALWAYS COMES EASY.



SOMETIMES ALL IT TAKES IS A BIT OF RED.



THE **BONES** WERE OF OTHERS WHO WERE BORN DIFFERENT IN SOME SIMPLE WAY, LIKE ME WITH MY **RED HAIR**.

BORN A DIFFERENT SHADE. DIFFERENT SIZE. TOO MANY FINGERS ON ONE HAND. EYES THAT DIDN'T WORK THE USUAL WAY.

OR MAYBE THEIR DIFFERENCE CAME FROM WORSHIPPING THE MOON INSTEAD OF THE SUN.

LOVING A MAN INSTEAD OF A WOMAN. PREFERRING LEAFY GREENS TO CHARRED MAMMOTH MEAT.

AMONG TRIBES ALL OVER THE AREA, PEOPLE WHO WERE DIFFERENT WERE LEFT IN THE BURNT PLACE TO DIE.



TEN YEARS LATER.

EXCEPT I DIDN'T DIE.



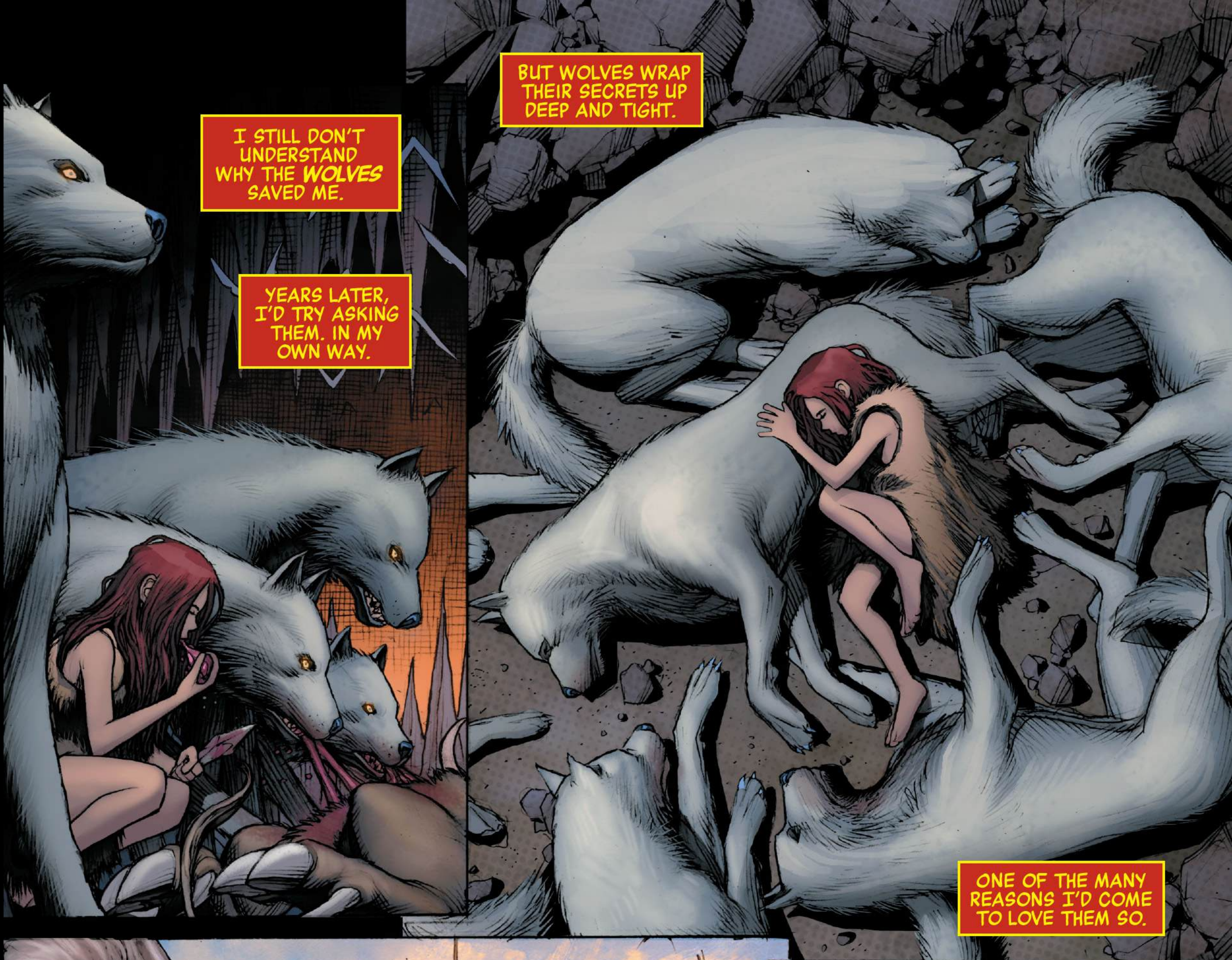
I'M THE ONLY THING THAT EVER CAME TO THAT WRETCHED, BLACKENED WASTELAND WHERE NOTHING EVER GROWS...



...TO LEARN TO LIVE.

RRRRGGGGH!!!





I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY THE **WOLVES** SAVED ME.

YEARS LATER, I'D TRY ASKING THEM. IN MY OWN WAY.

BUT WOLVES WRAP THEIR SECRETS UP DEEP AND TIGHT.

ONE OF THE MANY REASONS I'D COME TO LOVE THEM SO.



AS I GREW, BECOMING A PART OF THE WOLF PACK, I FOUND MYSELF RETURNING TO THE BURNT PLACE NOW AND THEN.

THOUGH NEVER FOR HUNTING.



NOT FOR MEAT AT LEAST.



RRRRGGGH!!!

I KNEW
I WASN'T
A WOLF.

BUT I ALSO KNEW I
DIDN'T BELONG WITH
THE TRIBE WHO'D
ABANDONED ME.



SO WHAT WAS I, I
OFTEN WONDERED,
STARING UP AT THE
DISTANT FIRES IN
THE NIGHT SKY.



AND
WHATEVER
I WAS...

...WERE
THERE **MORE**
OF ME?



DON'T
HURT HIM.



I'LL
TAKE THE
CHILD.

HHRGH?

I DIDN'T
UNDERSTAND
WHAT I WAS
HEARING.

I'D NEVER
HEARD *WORDS*
SPOKEN BEFORE.



I ALSO DIDN'T
UNDERSTAND THAT
I WASN'T HEARING
THEM ON THE OUTSIDE.

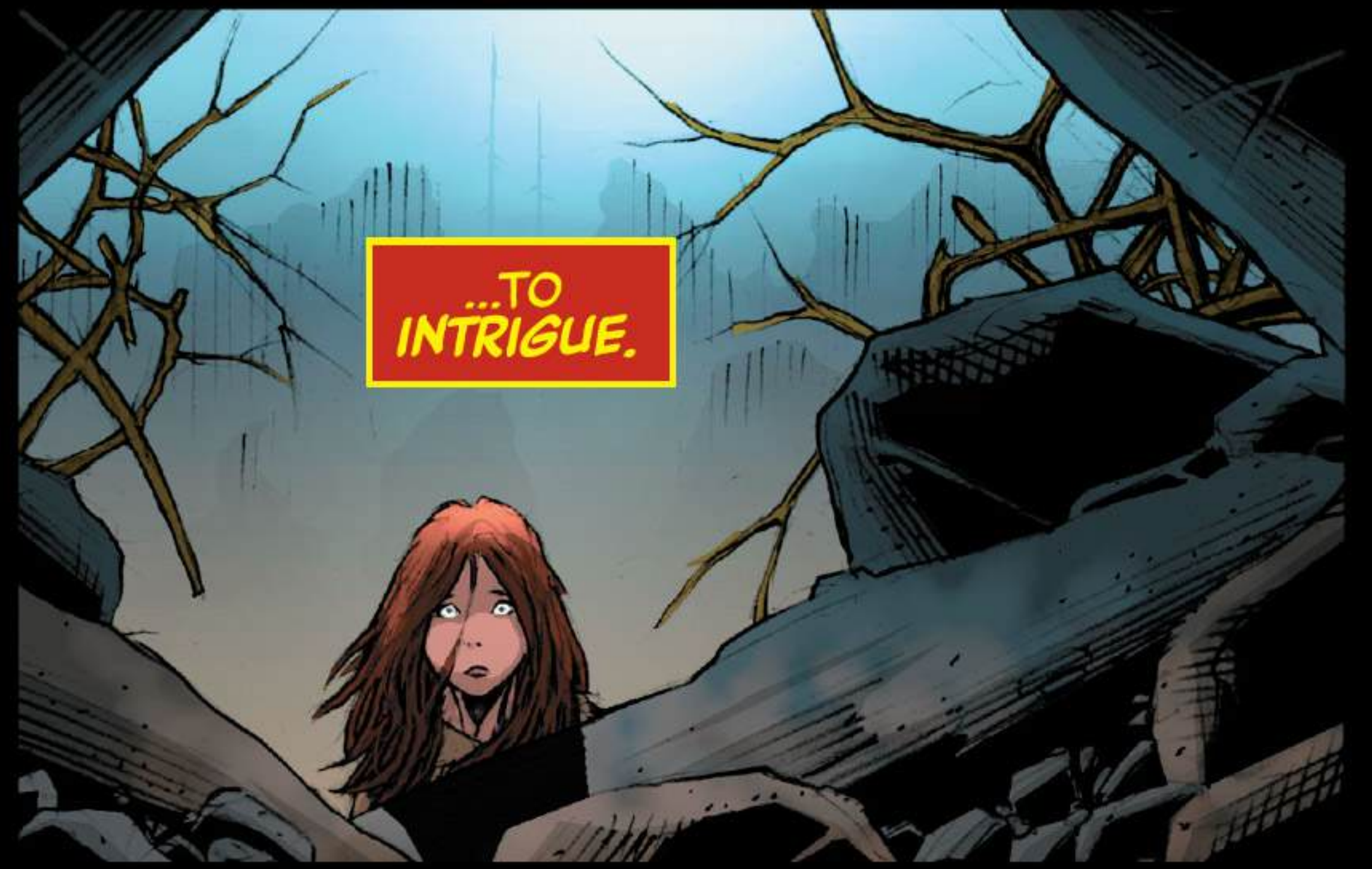
I TOOK IT FOR SOME
SORT OF *DEVILRY*, AND
LIKE MY PARENTS,
I GAVE IN TO FEAR.



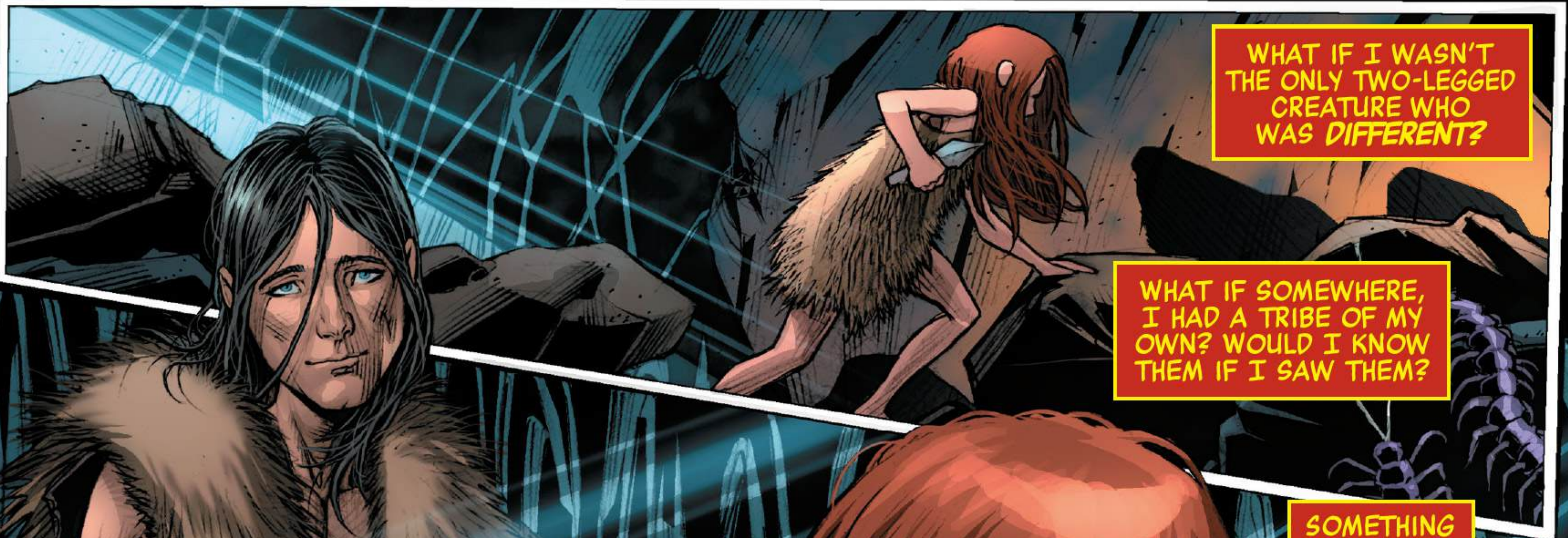
FOR A
TIME.



BUT WHEN WE CAN
OPEN OUR MINDS
TO THE AS-YET
UNEXPLORED, WE
MAY FIND OUR
APPREHENSION
GIVING WAY...



...TO
INTRIGUE.



WHAT IF I WASN'T
THE ONLY TWO-LEGGED
CREATURE WHO
WAS DIFFERENT?

WHAT IF SOMEWHERE,
I HAD A TRIBE OF MY
OWN? WOULD I KNOW
THEM IF I SAW THEM?

SOMETHING
TOLD ME I
WOULD.

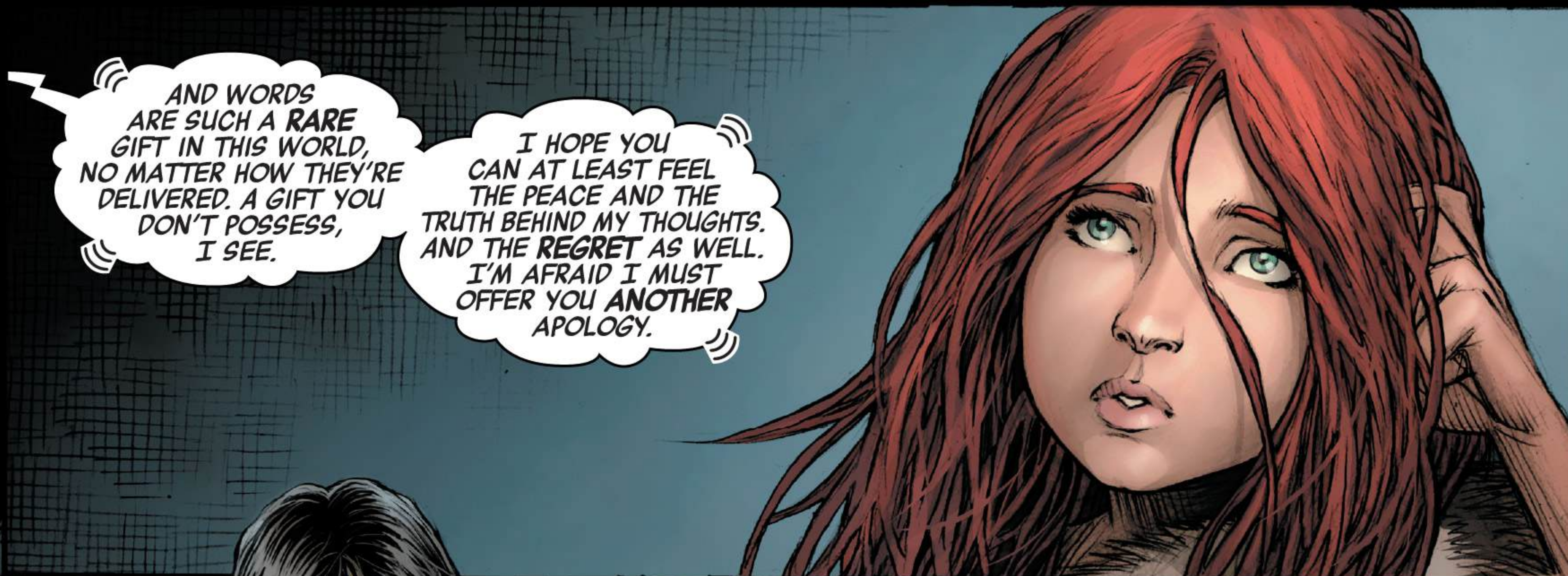
YOU'RE
THE ONE
THE WOLVES
TOOK.



DON'T RUN.
I WON'T
HURT YOU.

THIS
CAVE IS A
SAFE PLACE. I
PROMISE
YOU.

YES, MY
VOICE IS INSIDE YOUR
HEAD. I APOLOGIZE FOR
THE INTRUSION. BUT IT'S
THE ONLY WAY I
CAN SPEAK.



AND WORDS
ARE SUCH A RARE
GIFT IN THIS WORLD,
NO MATTER HOW THEY'RE
DELIVERED. A GIFT YOU
DON'T POSSESS,
I SEE.

I HOPE YOU
CAN AT LEAST FEEL
THE PEACE AND THE
TRUTH BEHIND MY THOUGHTS.
AND THE REGRET AS WELL.
I'M AFRAID I MUST
OFFER YOU ANOTHER
APOLOGY.



I'M
SORRY I
DIDN'T HELP
YOU.

I WAS
WATCHING
WHEN YOU WERE
BROUGHT TO THE
BURNT PLACE AS A
BABY. I WAS TOO
AFRAID TO MOVE.
SUCH AS I
CAN.

BUT AFTER
YOU WERE TAKEN
BY THE WOLVES...I
VOWED TO NEVER
STAND BY AGAIN
AND WATCH ONE
OF US DIE.



I THOUGHT
THEY WOULD'VE
EATEN YOU. BUT
HERE YOU ARE,
BACK FROM
THE DEAD.

TELL ME,
GIRL WITH
THE HAIR LIKE
FIRE...

...WOULD
YOU LIKE TO
COME HOME
NOW?

I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND
HIS MIND-SOUNDS.
I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND
EVEN THE IDEA OF WORDS.

BUT SOMEHOW
I COULD FEEL HIS
MEANING. AND I
JUST HOPED...



...THE WOLVES WOULD UNDERSTAND AS WELL.

THEY HOWLED FOR MANY DAYS WHEN I LEFT. AND THERE WOULD BE MANY NIGHTS TO COME WHEN I'D WISH I'D STAYED.

BUT I KNEW I HAD TO GO.



I KNEW FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE...

IT'S OKAY. NO ONE WILL HURT YOU HERE. WE'RE YOUR TRIBE NOW, FIREHAIR.

NO MATTER WHERE YOU WERE FROM BEFORE. YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AFRAID ANYMORE. NONE OF US DO.



...I'D FOUND WHERE I BELONGED.

WE'RE THE TRIBE WITHOUT FEAR.

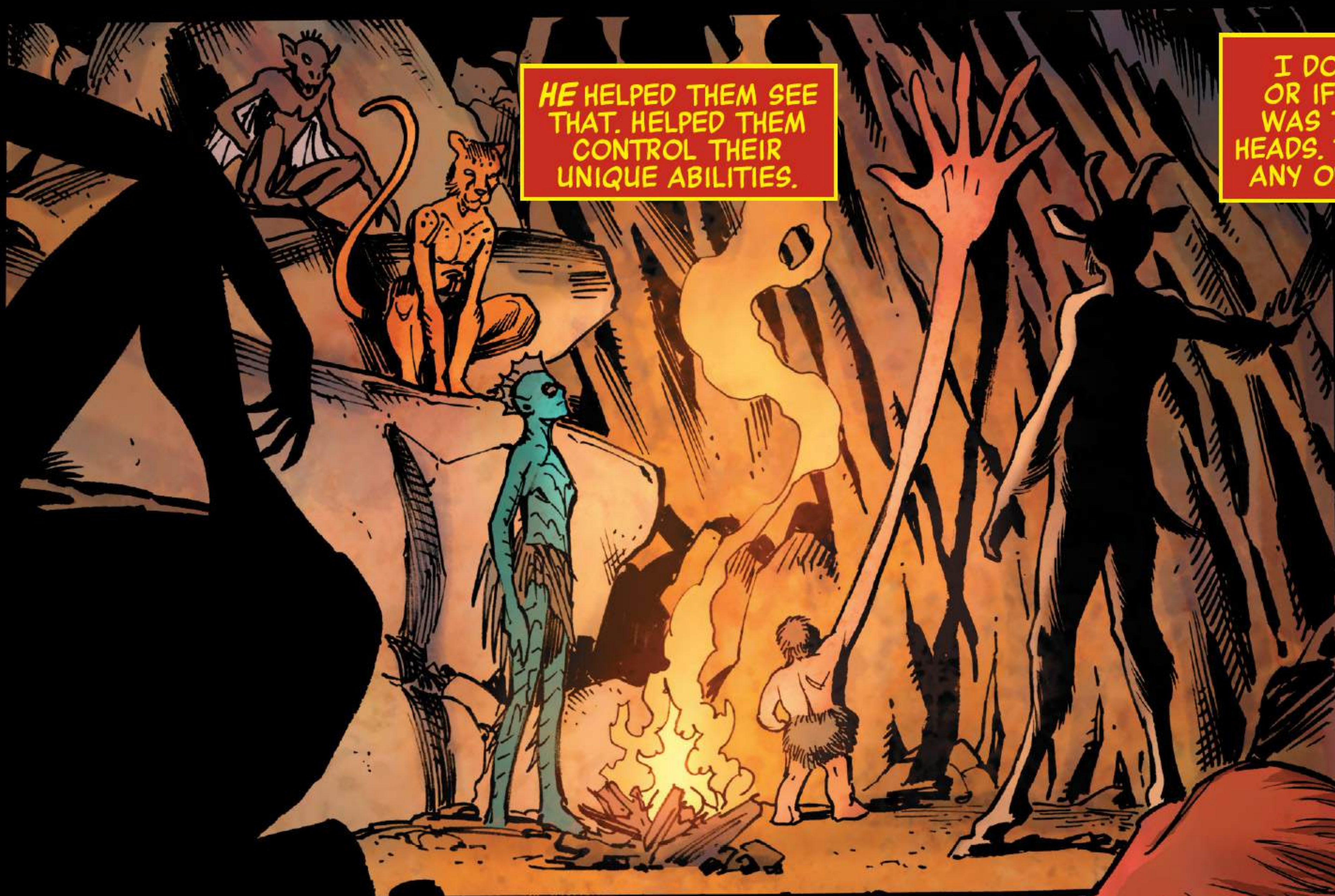


IN THIS NEW TRIBE, WE WERE ALL DIFFERENT.

BUT SOME WERE MORE DIFFERENT THAN OTHERS.

SOME COULD DO **AMAZING** THINGS.

THEY HADN'T BEEN BORN THAT WAY. BUT ONCE THE CHANGES CAME OVER THEM, THEY KNEW THAT'S WHO THEY WERE **MEANT** TO BE.



HE HELPED THEM SEE THAT. HELPED THEM CONTROL THEIR UNIQUE ABILITIES.

I DON'T KNOW HIS NAME. OR IF HE EVER HAD ONE. HE WAS THE VOICE IN ALL OUR HEADS. THE STRONGEST PERSON ANY OF US HAD EVER KNOWN.



FIREHAIR?



FIREHAIR, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

EHHRRGGGH!!!

I'VE COME TO CALL HIM THE **HIGHWALKER**. AND IF I'D NEVER MET HIM, I KNOW WITHOUT A DOUBT...

...I WOULD'VE GONE **MAD** THAT DAY.

THE DAY I FOUND
OUT JUST HOW
DIFFERENT I WAS.

THEY'RE
COMING.

TURNS OUT I WASN'T THE
ONLY ONE WHO'D MANAGED
TO **OVERCOME** THEIR FEAR.

THE TRIBES WHO'D BEEN
LEAVING THEIR UNWANTED
BABIES HERE TO DIE HAD
FINALLY REALIZED THAT
THERE WERE MORE THAN JUST
BUZZARDS SURVIVING
IN THE BURNT PLACE.

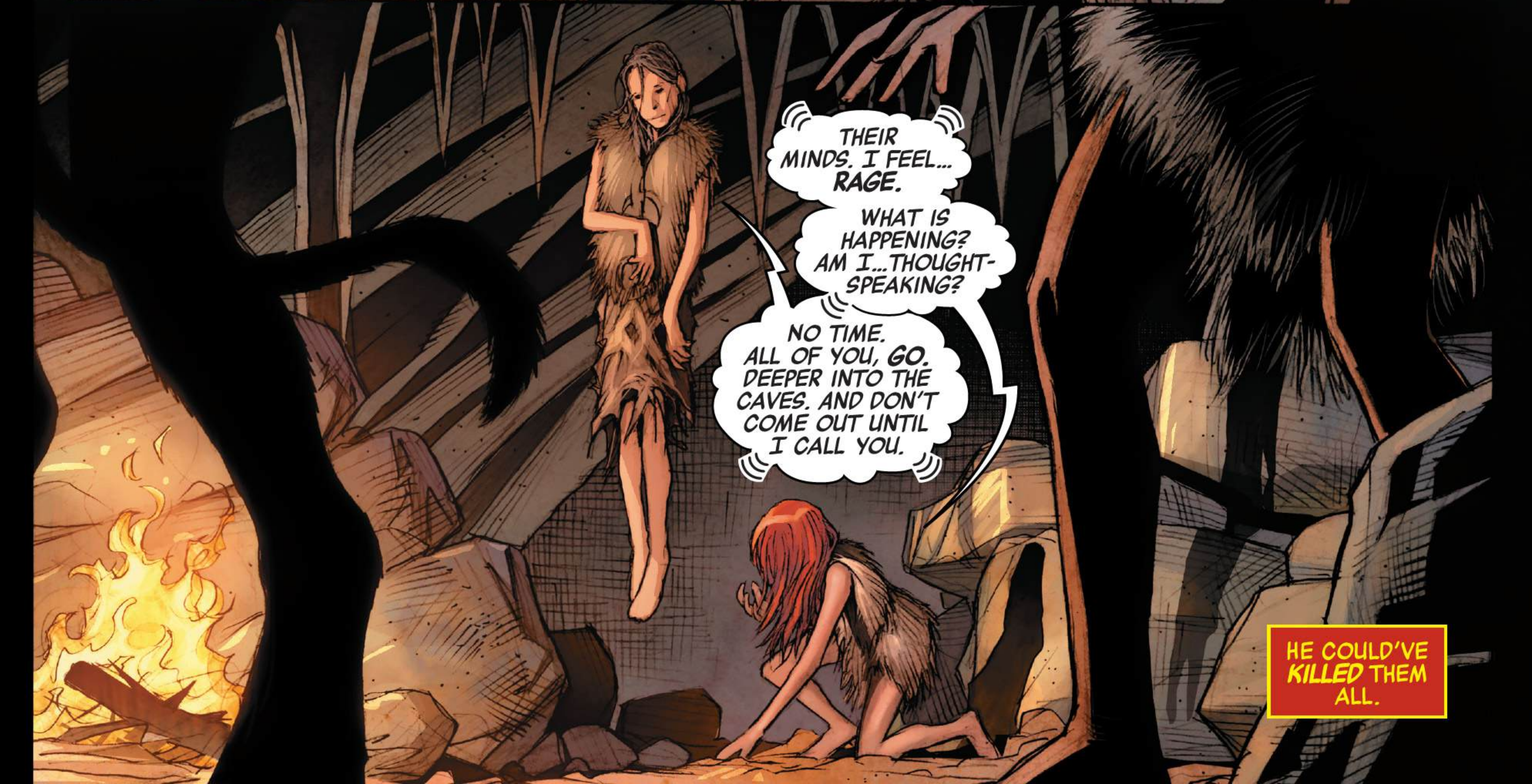


THEIR
MINDS. I FEEL...
RAGE.

WHAT IS
HAPPENING?
AM I...THOUGHT-
SPEAKING?

NO TIME.
ALL OF YOU, **GO.**
DEEPER INTO THE
CAVES. AND DON'T
COME OUT UNTIL
I CALL YOU.

HE COULD'VE
KILLED THEM
ALL.





GO!

HE COULD'VE TORN THEIR BRAINS TO BLOODY SHREDS.

HE COULD'VE SMASHED THEIR BODIES TO PULP OR COMPELLED THEM TO DO IT TO ONE ANOTHER.

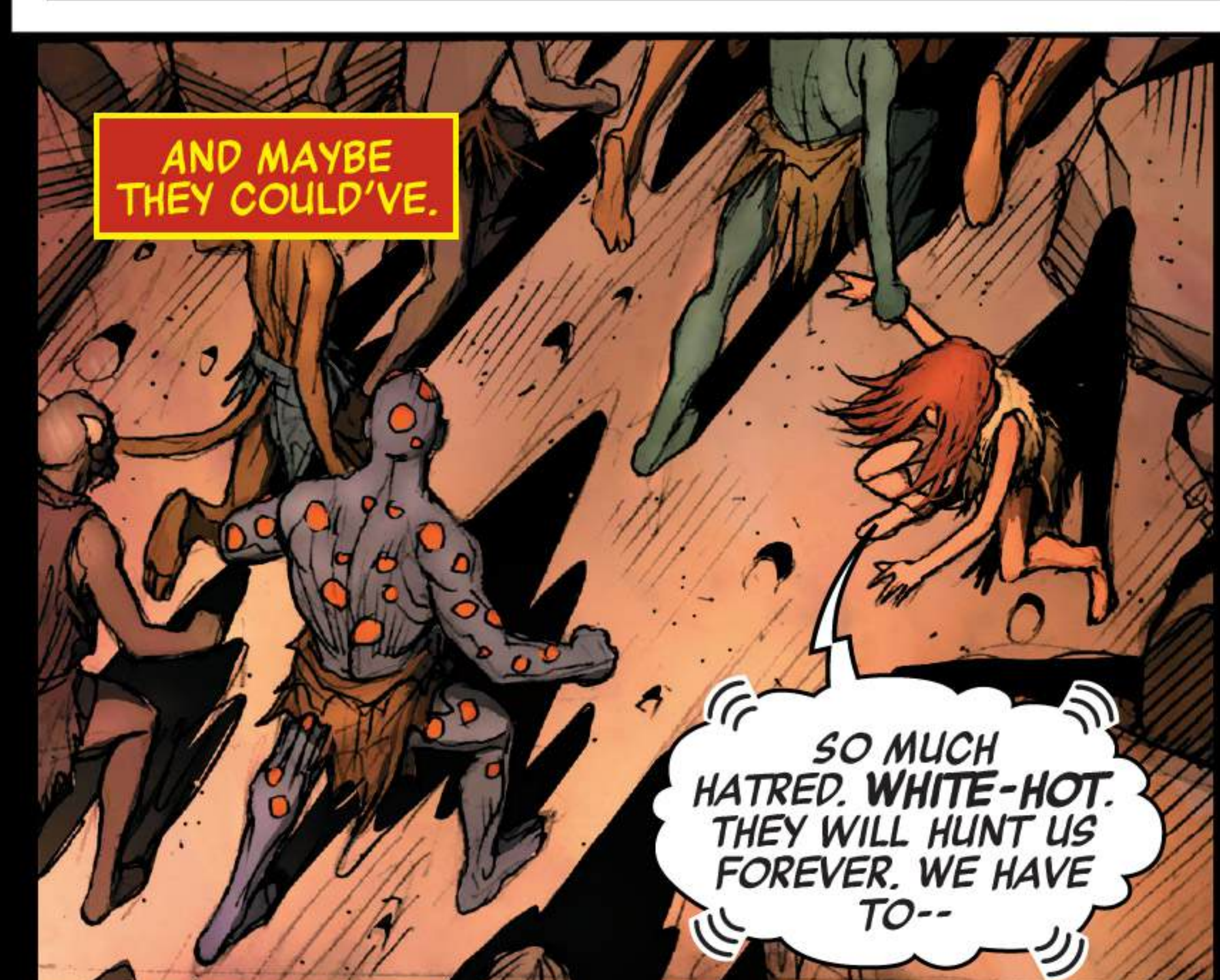


BUT THAT WASN'T WHO THE HIGHWALKER WAS.

CALM YOUR RAGE. WE ARE NOT A THREAT TO YOU. PLEASE, GO BACK TO YOUR FORESTS AND LEAVE US BE.

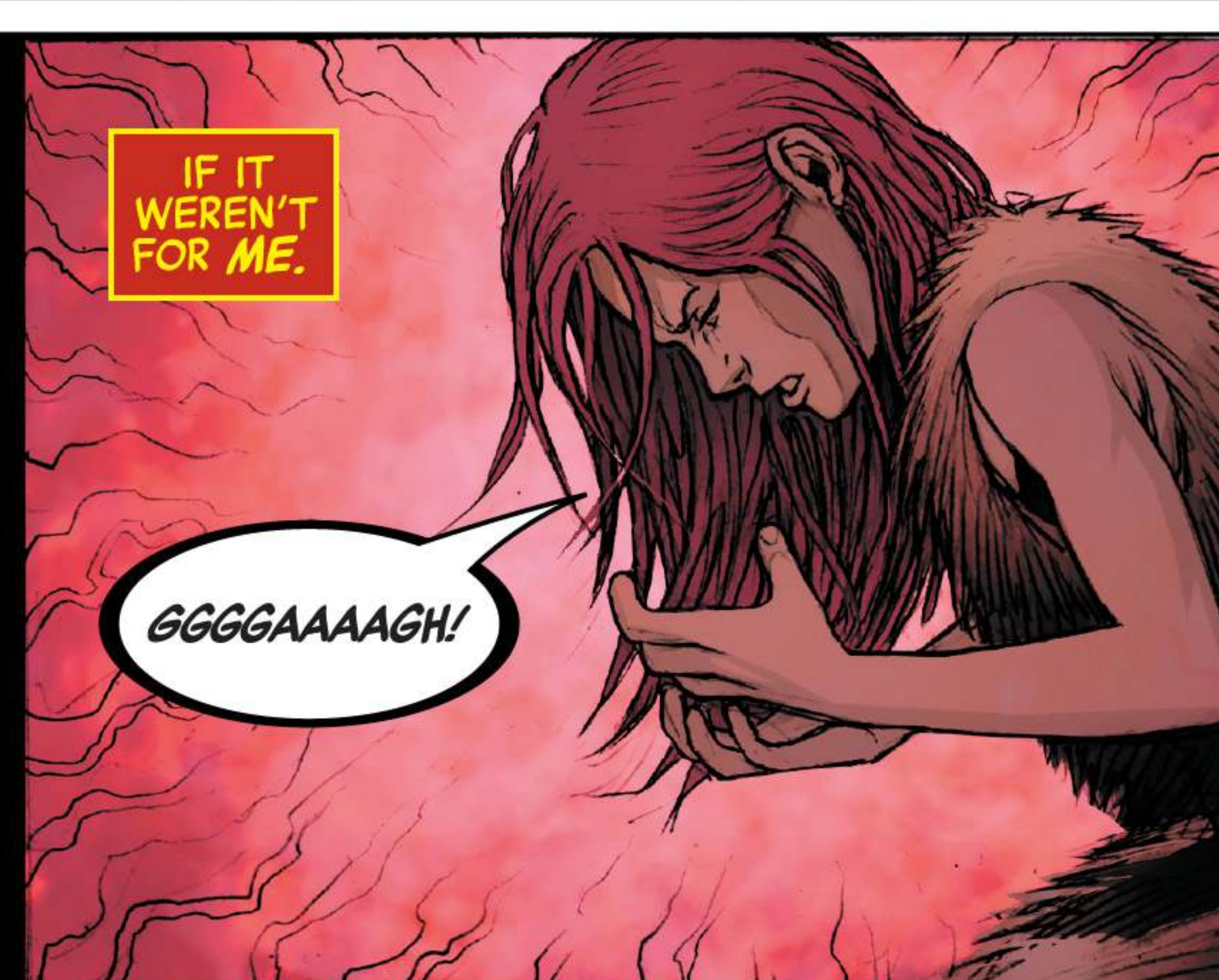


HE DIDN'T WANT TO HURT THEM OR CONTROL THEM. HE WANTED THEM TO SEE THE TRUTH WITH THEIR OWN IGNORANT EYES.



AND MAYBE THEY COULD'VE.

SO MUCH HATRED. WHITE-HOT. THEY WILL HUNT US FOREVER. WE HAVE TO--



IF IT WEREN'T FOR ME.

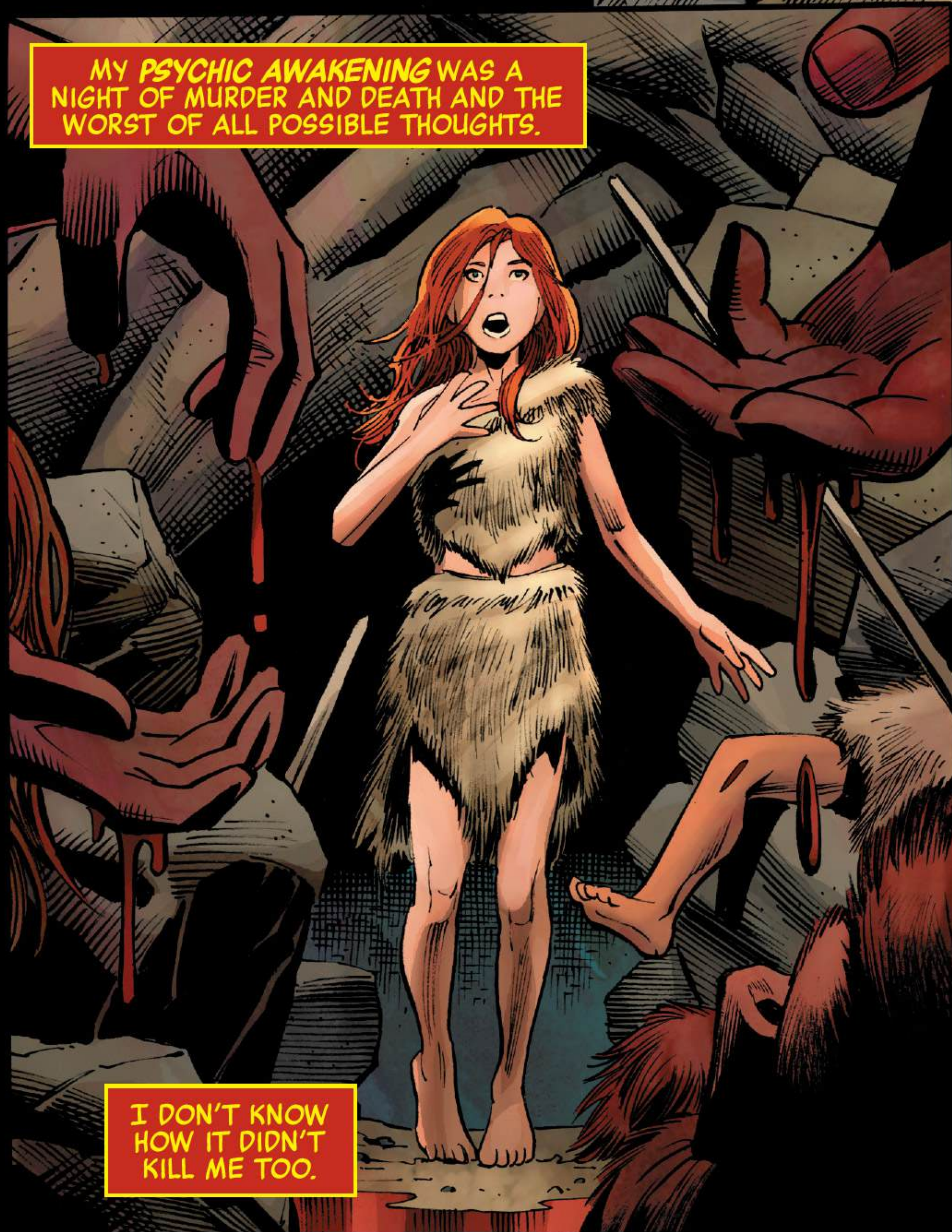
GGGGAAAAGH!

I WAS IN HIS
MIND AS HE DIED.



I WAS INSIDE ALL THEIR MINDS
AS THEY FOUGHT AND SLAUGHTERED
AND LOST CONTROL OF THEIR
OWN POWERS AND DID AS MUCH
DAMAGE TO EACH OTHER AS THEY
DID TO THEIR ENEMIES.

MY PSYCHIC AWAKENING WAS A
NIGHT OF MURDER AND DEATH AND THE
WORST OF ALL POSSIBLE THOUGHTS.



I DON'T KNOW
HOW IT DIDN'T
KILL ME TOO.

I LAY THERE
FOR A LONG TIME
WISHING IT HAD.



THEN I STUMBLED
THROUGH THE
CARNAGE FOR HOURS,
WONDERING IF IT WAS
POSSIBLE TO KILL
YOURSELF WITH
YOUR OWN MIND.

AND REALIZING
THAT THE
HIGHWALKER HAD
BEEN WRONG
ABOUT ME...



NOTHING COMES
BACK FROM THE DEAD. NOT REALLY.

NOT FOR
LONG AT
LEAST.

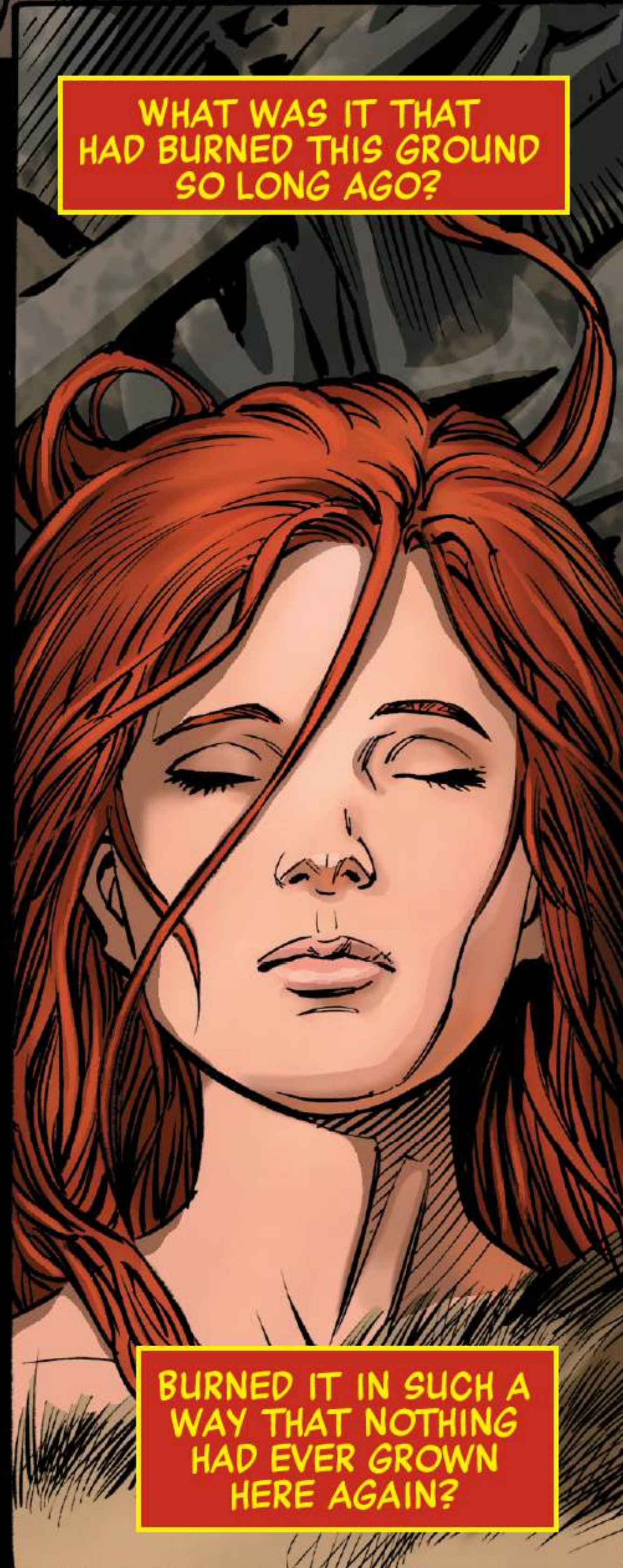


THE BUZZARDS WOULD GET
THEIR MEAL. THE ONE THEY
SHOULD'VE HAD ALL ALONG.



AS I LAY ON THAT BURNT GROUND,
SURRENDERING MY FLESH TO
FEATHERED DEATH, I SUDDENLY ASKED
MYSELF FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME...

...HOW DID THE
BURNT PLACE
COME TO BE?



WHAT WAS IT THAT
HAD BURNED THIS GROUND
SO LONG AGO?

BURNED IT IN SUCH A
WAY THAT NOTHING
HAD EVER GROWN
HERE AGAIN?



AND WHAT
WOULD
HAPPEN...

...IF IT EVER
CAME BACK.





THE **PHOENIX** HAD BURNED ITS MARK INTO MY WORLD YEARS BEFORE. INTO MANY WORLDS.

LIKE A LURE.



MY RAW, MUTANT POWER DREW IT TO ME.

ALONG WITH MY POTENTIAL FOR BLOODY RUIN.



IT SAW IN ME THE CHANCE TO DO WHAT IT WAS BORN TO DO.



TO BURN PLANETS TO ASH.



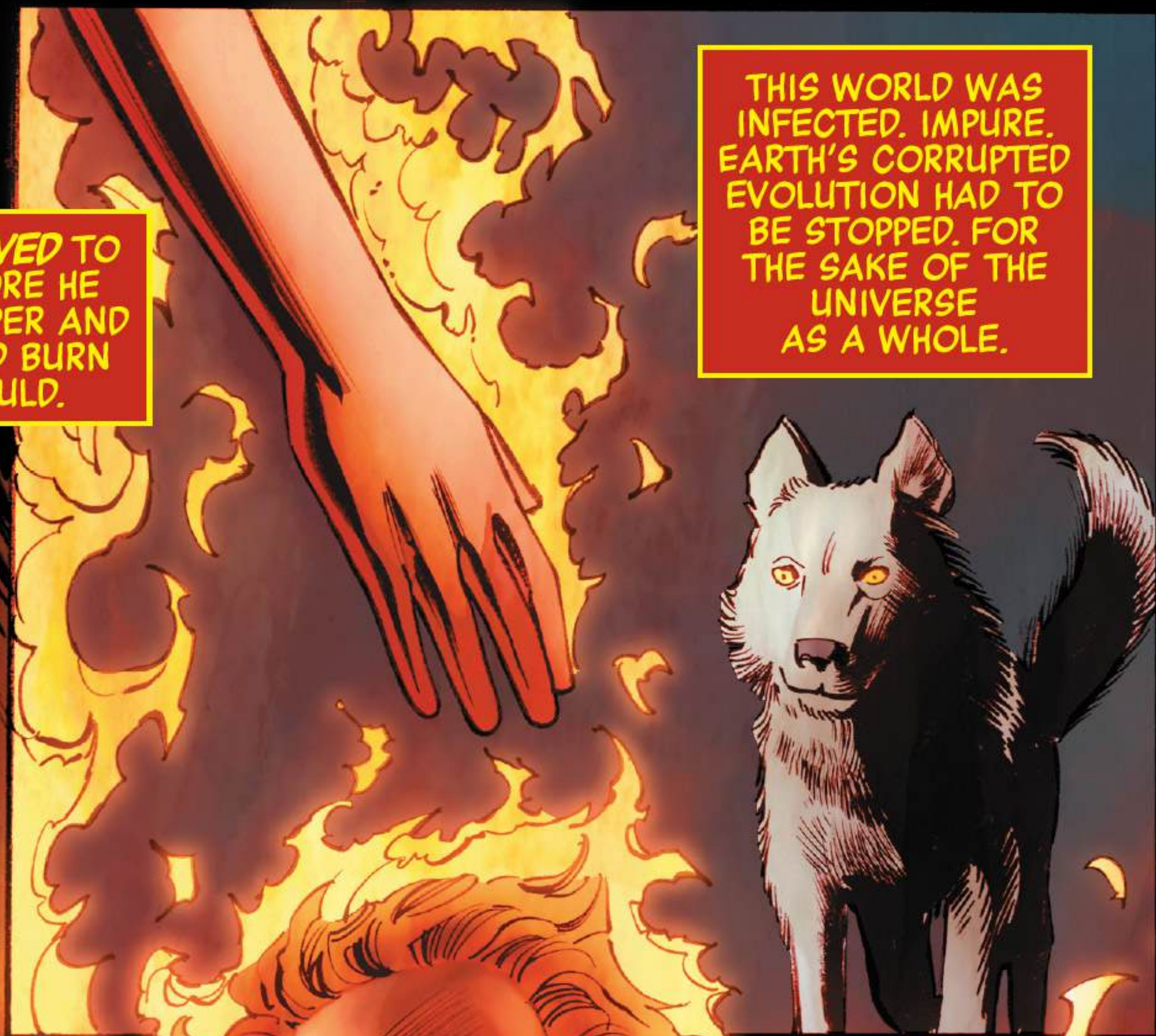
I WOULD'VE
MADE IT FEEL
JUSTIFIED IN
DOING SO.

MY LOSS. MY
HUNGER FOR
VENGEANCE.



AND THE CRUELTY
OF THE WORLD I
WAS BORN INTO.

MAN **DESERVED** TO
BURN. BEFORE HE
COULD PROSPER AND
EXPAND. AND BURN
HIM I WOULD.



THIS WORLD WAS
INFECTED. IMPURE.
EARTH'S CORRUPTED
EVOLUTION HAD TO
BE STOPPED. FOR
THE SAKE OF THE
UNIVERSE
AS A WHOLE.



IT WOULD'VE BEEN A RIGHTEOUS
FIRE. MAKING THE ENTIRE EARTH
INTO THE BURNT PLACE.

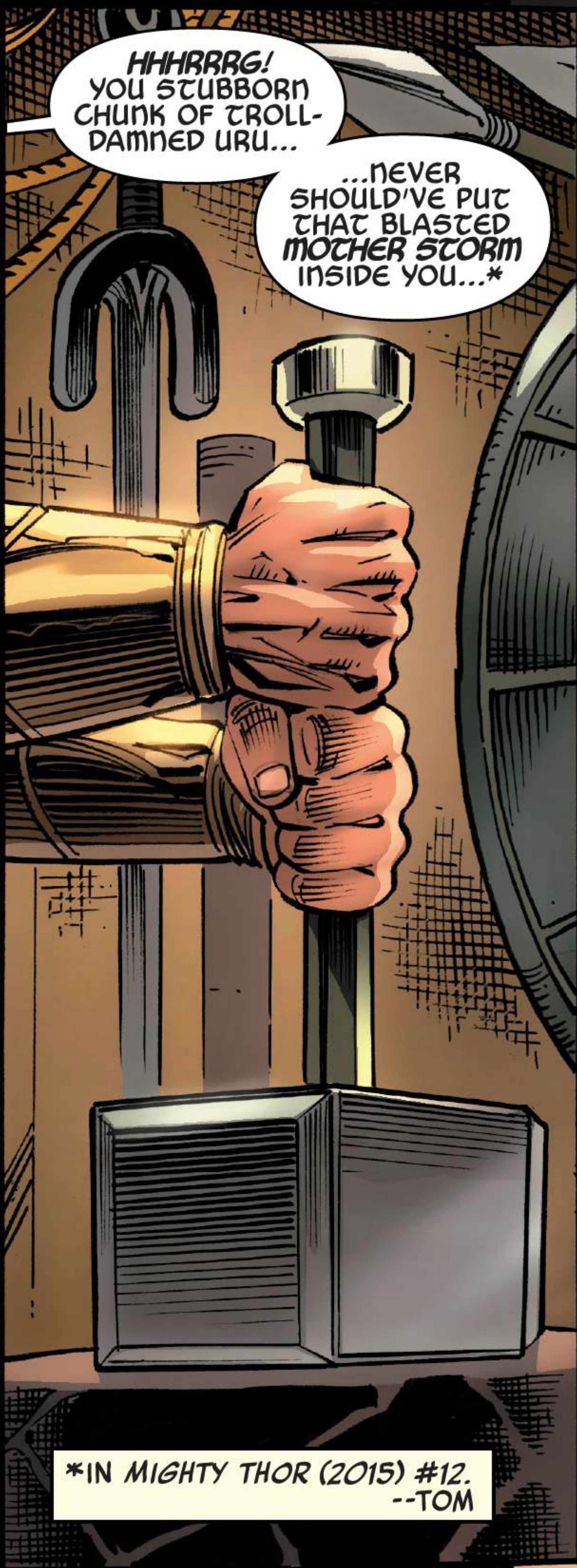
HUMANKIND WILL
NEVER KNOW HOW
CLOSE THEY CAME TO
EXTINCTION WHILE
STILL IN THEIR CRIB.

YOU...
YOU **SAVED**
ME FROM THE
BUZZARDS.



AND THAT THEY WERE
SAVED...BY THE LOVE
OF A WOLF.

BUT
NOW...I'M
THE BUZZARD,
AREN'T I?
I CAN...
BE BETTER
THAN THAT.
CAN'T
I?



ASGARD IS UNDER ATTACK! AND NOTHING WE HAVE CAN SEEM TO STOP--

*IN MIGHTY THOR (2015) #12.
--TOM





ODIN OF
ASGARD.

YOU MAY
CALL ME THE
PHOENIX.

I'M
PUTTING A
TEAM TOGETHER.
TO SAVE THE
WORLD.

FROM
ITSELF.

AND FROM
PEOPLE LIKE
YOU AND ME.

YOU
IN?

40 ENTER THE PHOENIX PART 1
"SLEEP NOW IN THE FIRE"





T'CHALLA
WOULD BE
QUIETLY
MEDITATING.

THOR WOULD BE GUZZLING MEAD
(BECAUSE HE SOMEHOW ALWAYS
HAS MEAD ON HIS PERSON) AND
BOOMING WITH LAUGHTER.

TONY WOULD BE GOING
ON AND ON ABOUT HIS
METICULOUS BATTLE PLANS.

ME? I GET MY KNUCKLES
WARMED UP AND THINK
ABOUT ALL THE TIMES
I'VE HAD MY TAIL KICKED.



BACK IN THE DAYS BEFORE THE *SHIELD*,
I WAS IN A WHOLE BUNCH OF FIGHTS
BEFORE I EVER WON A SINGLE ONE.

THOSE ARE THE FIGHTS I REMEMBER.
ESPECIALLY IN MOMENTS LIKE THIS,
RIGHT BEFORE THE BELL RINGS.

I THINK ABOUT ALL THE
BEATINGS I'VE EVER TAKEN,
TO REMIND MYSELF THAT
UNDERNEATH THE FANCY
DUDS AND MUSCLES...

...I'M STILL JUST 98 POUNDS
OF CHEWED BUBBLEGUM FROM
THE LOWER EAST SIDE.

ONLY REASON I'VE STAYED ALIVE
SO LONG IS THAT I'VE OUTWORKED
EVERY OPPONENT I'VE EVER FACED.

THE MOMENT I GET
CARELESS OR COCKY
AND FORGET THAT...

...IS THE DAY
CAPTAIN AMERICA
DIES FOR GOOD.

ROGERS?!
HA!

GIVE
THIS ROUND
TO DOOM!

I FIGURE IT'S IMPORTANT TO
ALWAYS REMEMBER HOW IT
FEELS TO BE THE **WEAKER MAN**.

TO NEVER TAKE MY
POWER FOR GRANTED.

A LESSON
DOCTOR DOOM
NEVER BOTHERED
TO LEARN.

THE SAVAGE LAND.
HIDDEN JURASSIC-ERA GAME PRESERVE.
GRAVEYARD OF DINOSAURS.
THE BATTLE FOR THE PHOENIX.
OPENING ROUND.

PHOENIX
FORCE! THIS...
BIT OF YOUR FIRE
YOU'VE SERVED ME...
DOOM DOES NOT
DO *APERITIFS*.

GIVE ME YOUR FULL
POWER AND BE DONE
WITH THIS *FARCE* OF
A *TOURNAMENT*!

DOOM IS ONE OF
THE VILEST VILLAINS
I'VE EVER MET.

I KNOW HOW
THIS GOES IF
HE WINS.

YOU WILL
FIND NO WORTHIER
MASTER UPON THIS
EARTH. DO YOU HEAR ME,
FIREBIRD? GIVE YOURSELF
WHOLLY UNTO DOOM,
AND TOGETHER WE WILL
BURN THIS PALTRY
COSMOS AS
NEVER--

BUT RIGHT NOW, I'M
ACTUALLY JUST AS WORRIED
ABOUT WHAT'LL HAPPEN...

...IF I
SHOULD
WIN.

GAAGH!

IF I FALL, I
FALL AS WHO I
AM. WHO I'VE
BEEN FOR THE
BETTER PART
OF A CENTURY.

NOBODY'S
BURNING,
VICTOR.

BUT IF I SOMEHOW
MAKE IT THROUGH THIS
WHOLE RIDICULOUS
FRACAS *VICTORIOUS*...

EXCEPT
FOR YOU.

WHAT
WILL I HAVE
BECOME?

OTHER
THAN LOST.

OTHER THAN
THE *PHOENIX*.



EARLIER.
AVENGERS MOUNTAIN.

THE PHOENIX FORCE
IS A GIANT
SPACE PARASITE.

MADE
OF FIRE.

**PHOENIX FORCE
NESTING SITE.**

LIKE A BIG ANGRY
STAR WITH WINGS.
AND UNGODLY
DESTRUCTIVE POWER.

ONCE IT GETS ITS
TALONS INTO A
HOST...WHOLE PLANETS
GO UP IN FLAMES.

UNTIL THE HOST
IS DRIVEN CRAZY
AND DIES.

LAST TIME IT CAME TO EARTH,
IT STARTED A WAR. BETWEEN
THE AVENGERS AND THE X-MEN.

WE ALL COULD'VE
HANDLED THAT
ONE BETTER.

NOW'S OUR
CHANCE.

WHY...

...HAVE
YOU
COME?



WE ALL AGREED WE COULDN'T RISK BRINGING *TELEPATHS* INTO THE AREA...FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY.

SO IT WAS *T'CHALLA'S* IDEA TO PLUG HIMSELF INTO THE CELESTIAL BRAIN OF *AVENGERS MOUNTAIN* TO TRY TO TALK TO THE PHOENIX.

THIS WORLD IS PROTECTED.



IT'S NOT A VOICE YOU HEAR WITH YOUR EARS. IT SEEMS TO EXPLODE FROM SOMEWHERE DEEP INSIDE YOUR OWN *GUTS*.

I TASTE COPPER. AND THIS MORNING'S OATMEAL.

THOR, BE READY TO CALL YOUR *BIFROST* IF WE NEED TO TRY TO TELEPORT IT OUT OF HERE IN A HURRY.

I CAN SEND THE BEAST INTO THE COLDEST DEPTHS OF *JOTUNHEIM*--BUT REST ASSURED, CAPTAIN, THE PHOENIX WILL RETURN.

UNTIL SHE GETS WHAT SHE WANTS. OR WHO SHE WANTS.

NO CHANGES IN BIG BIRD'S ENERGY READINGS.

WAKANDA HELICARRIER FLEET STANDING BY.

GODS HELP WHOEVER THAT IS.

WHY HAVE YOU--



GUGH!

I CAN TELL YOU WHY SHE'S COME.



SHE'S
HERE FOR
ME.

NAMOR!

I WAS
THE ONE WHO
CALLED TO THE
PHOENIX,
T'CHALLA.

AND SHE
ANSWERED FROM
ACROSS THE BLACK
SEA OF SPACE.

ONCE SHE
AND I ARE **REUNITED**,
THE DEPTHS OF THE
OCEANS WILL BE THE ONLY
PLACE ON THIS UNGRATEFUL
PLANET THAT ISN'T
IN FLAMES.

**DEFENDERS
OF THE DEEP--**
KEEP THE AVENGERS
AT BAY...

...WHILE
NAMOR GOES
TO **MARRY** HIS
FIERY QUEEN.

THE WORLD
CAN'T AFFORD
ANOTHER WAR.



SORRY,
BUB.

WE'RE ALREADY
FIGHTING WAY TOO
MANY WARS AS IT IS...

...BUT THE PHOENIX
DOESN'T SEEM TO
CARE ABOUT THAT.

AFRAID I'M
GONNA HAVE
TO *CRASH* THAT
WEDDING!

AND IT'S
NOT ALONE.



I DON'T
LIKE THIS.

UNGH!

NOW.

EVEN AS I FEEL
MYSELF **WINNING**.
AND DOOM'S
FACE **BREAKING**.

THIS FEELING.
THIS **POWER**.

THIS ISN'T
RIGHT.

I'VE HELD THE
COSMIC CUBE.
USED IT. PROBABLY
MORE THAN I
EVER SHOULD'VE.

I'VE WORN THE
INFINITY GAUNTLET AND
SAVED THE WORLD WITH
A WAVE OF MY HAND.

BUT I'M NOT A GOD.
I'M JUST THE GUY
WHO SOMETIMES TELLS
THEM WHAT TO DO.

I'M A SOLDIER AND
A STRUGGLING ARTIST
AND THE SON OF A
DRUNK. AND MY FEET
BELONG ON THE...

WAIT...
WHAT AM
I...

RRRRRRRGGH!!!

...GROUND.

UUUGH!

YOUR FIRE
WILL BE *MINE*,
ROGERS!

ALL OF
IT WILL BE
MINE!

HGHK!

IT *WANTS* US
TO KILL EACH
OTHER.

THE
PHOENIX WILL
BE DOOM'S!

AND THE LAST
KILLER LEFT
STANDING WINS
THE PRIZE.

BUT WE'RE NOT
GOING TO PLAY THE
PHOENIX'S GAME.

ARE WE?



LOGAN. LAST
TIME THE PHOENIX
CAME TO EARTH, YOU
AND I STOOD ON
THE SAME SIDE.

WHERE DO
WE STAND
NOW?

IN A
WHOLE
NEW WORLD,
CAP.

BUT DON'T
WORRY, THE
X-MEN AIN'T
LOOKING FOR
A WAR.



NOT JUST ON THE VOLCANIC ISLAND THE PHOENIX HAD RISEN OUT OF THE ARCTIC OCEAN. PEOPLE FELT IT ALL OVER THE WORLD.



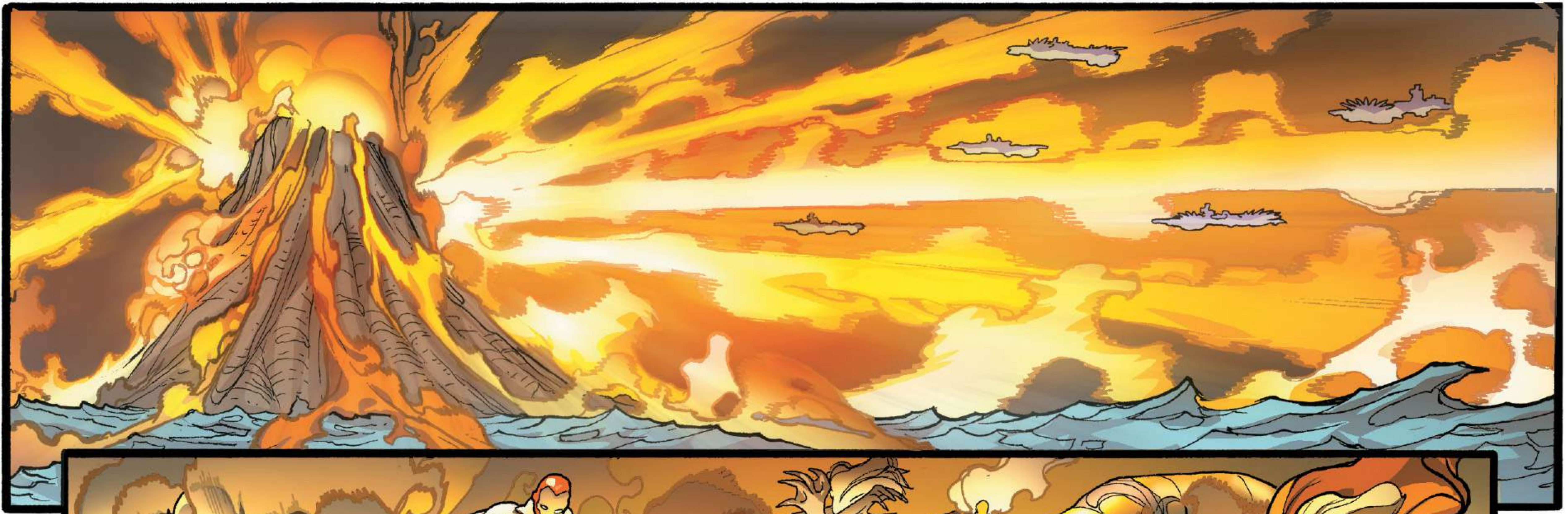
THEY FELT A FIRE INSIDE THEIR HEADS. A VOICE MADE OF WHITE PHOSPHOROUS, SCREAMING THEIR NAMES.

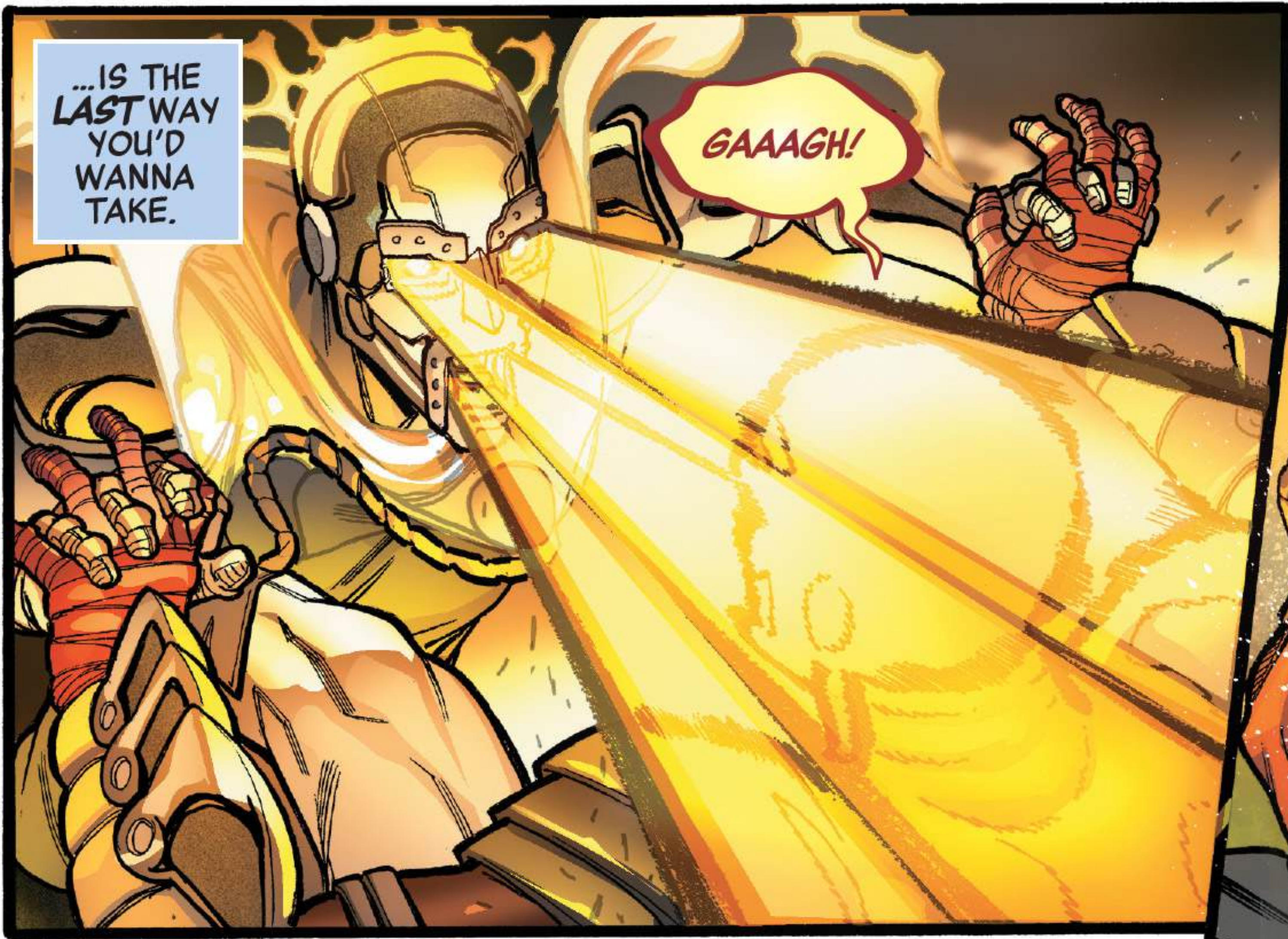


IT CALLED ME STEVEN. THE MAN WHO COULDN'T DIE BY ICE.

AND THEN...

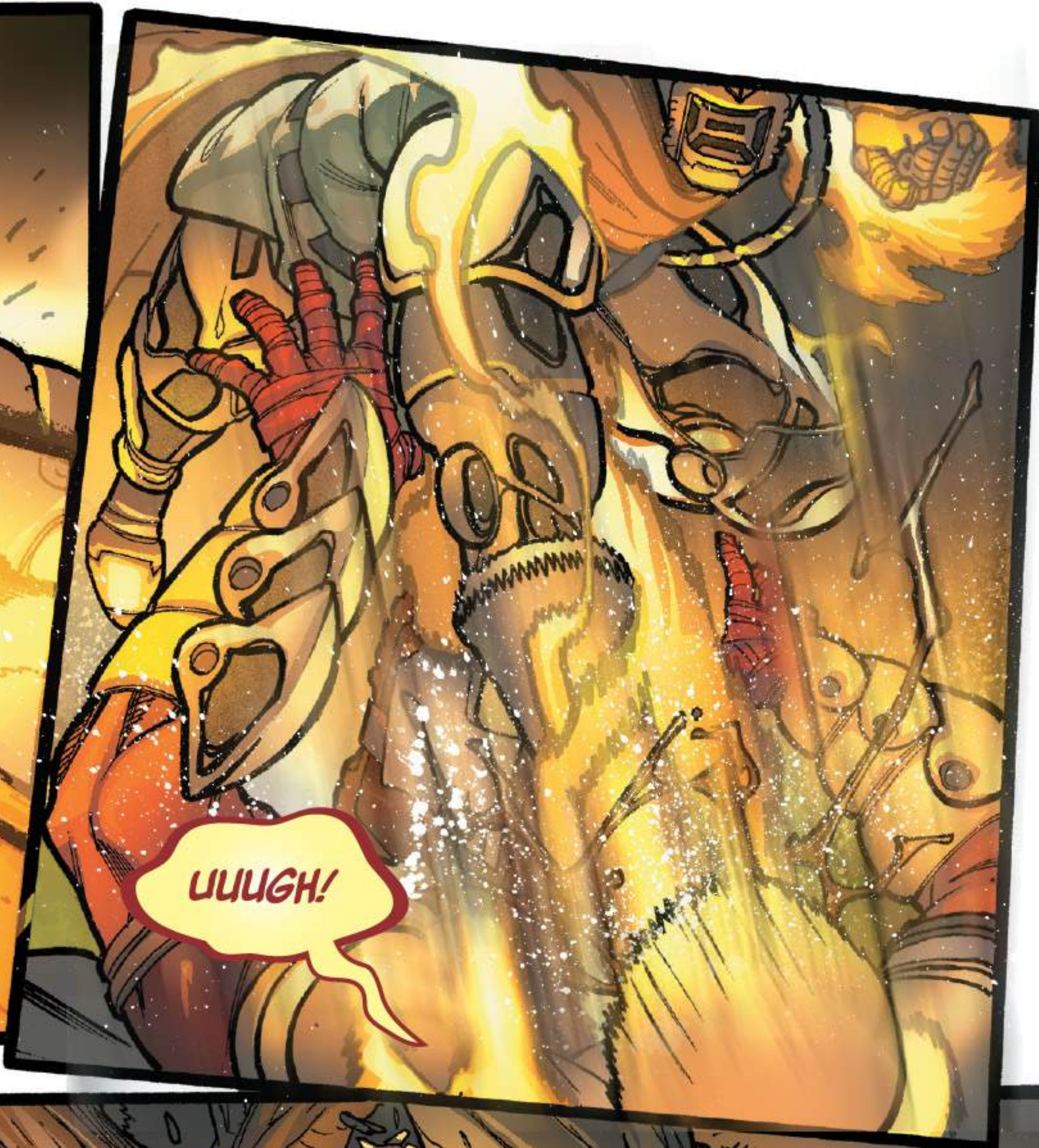
THE PHOENIX! IT'S WAKING UP! EVERYBODY--





...IS THE
LAST WAY
YOU'D
WANNA
TAKE.

GAAAGH!



UUUGH!



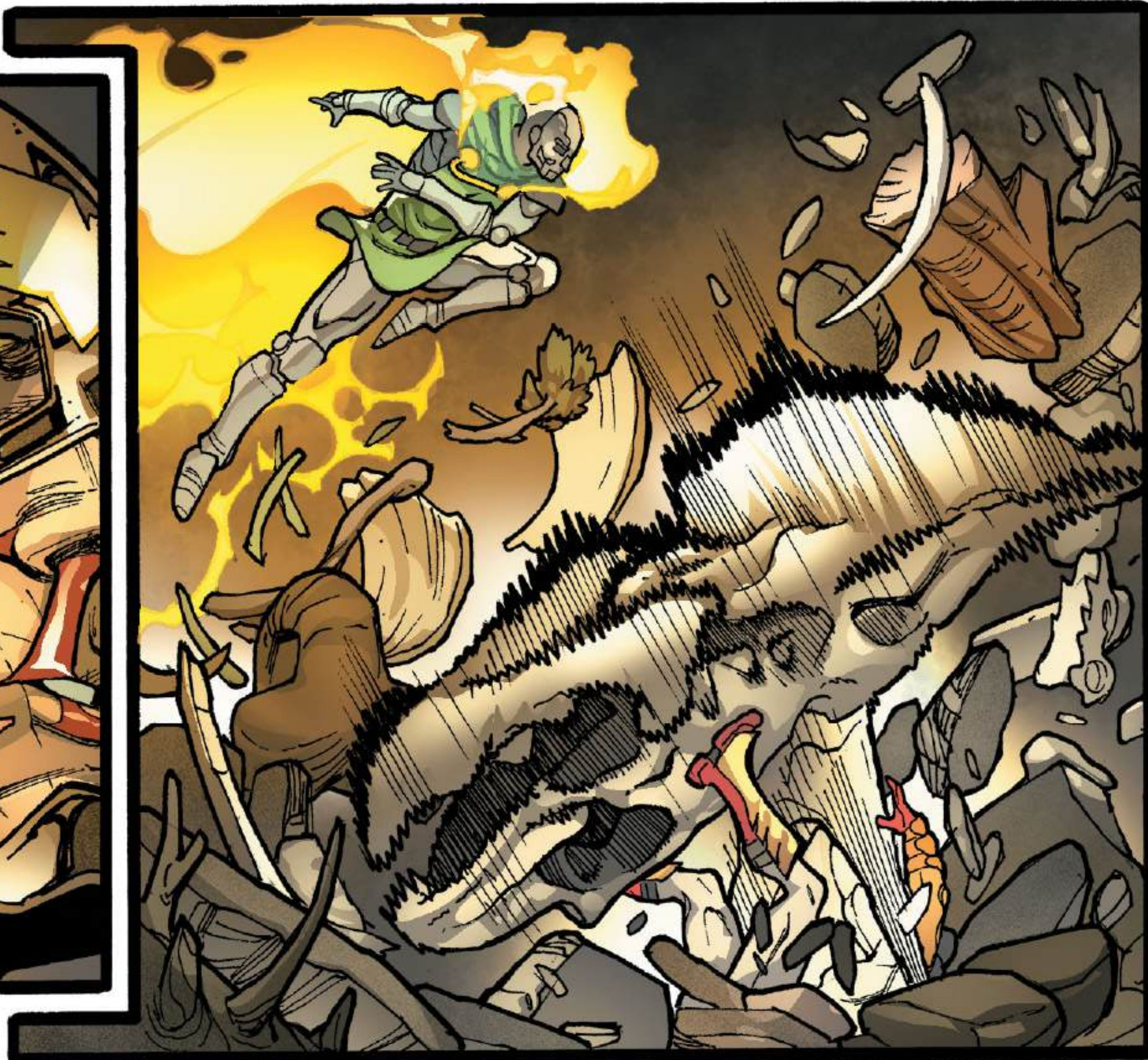
I KNOW
WHAT DYING
FEELS LIKE.



FEELS LIKE...
FREEZING.



SHARON...



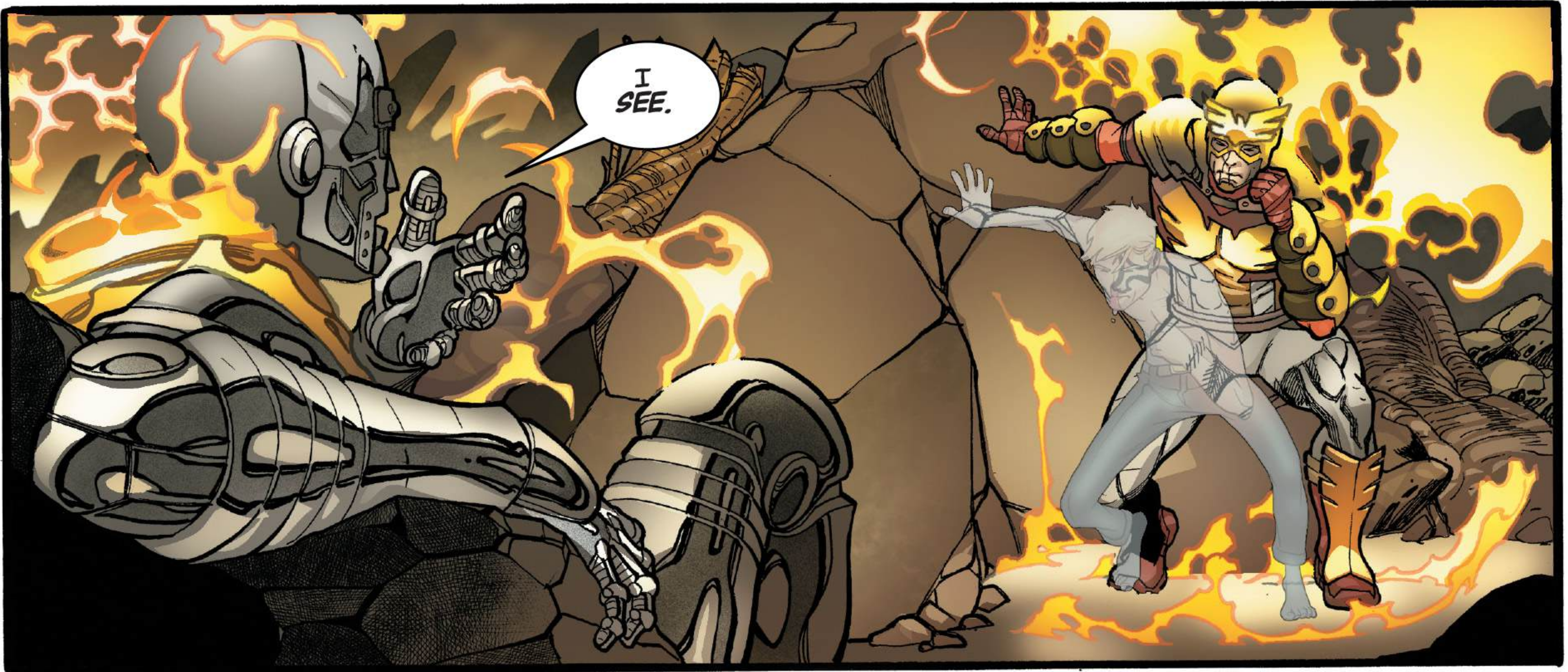


I KNOW
WHAT DYING
FEELS LIKE.

**GRRR
GGH!!**

FEELS LIKE
BURNING.







CAP!

HEY, HE'S
BACK!

GOD.
DOOM NEARLY
KILLED HIM.

GUESS
THAT TELLS
US WHO **WON**
THE FIRST
ROUND.



I
DID.

A NAZI'S
JAW BREAKING
BENEATH MY
KNUCKLES.

A NEW YORK
SUNRISE WITHOUT
SMOKE OR SCREAMS.

EVERYONE MAKING
IT BACK TO BASE
FOR COLD BEERS.

I KNOW WHAT
VICTORY FEELS
LIKE.

DAMN.
THAT SURE
RAISES A FEW
QUESTIONS.

NO. IT
ONLY RAISES
ONE.

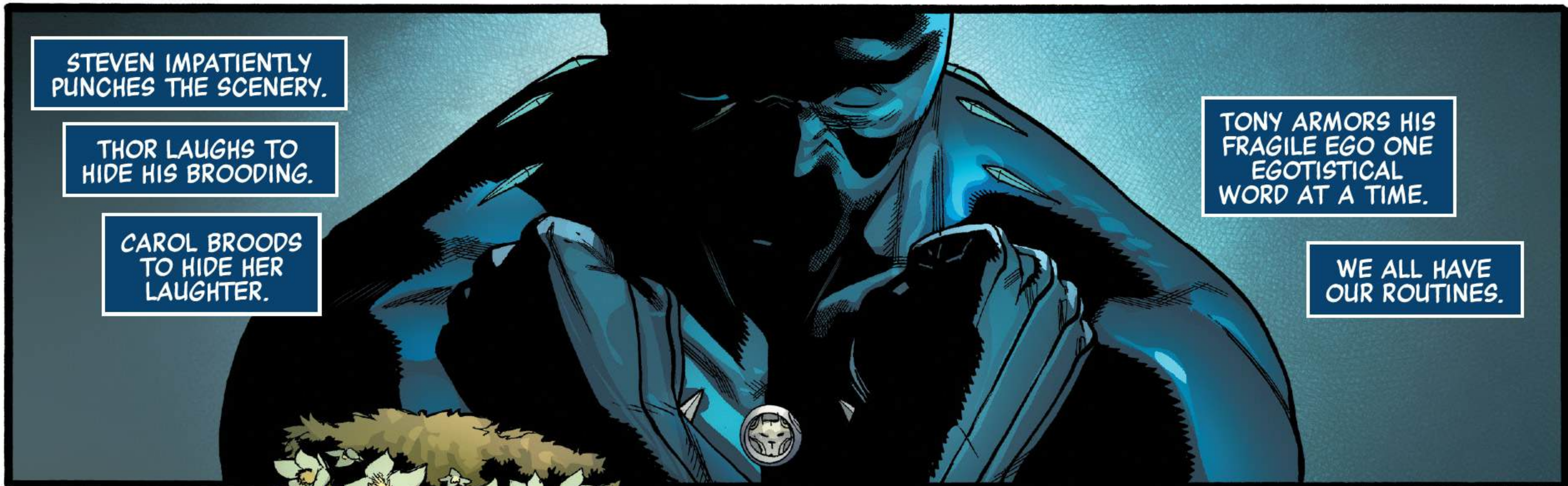
THIS
ISN'T IT.





41 ENTER THE PHOENIX PART 2
"BLACK FLAME IN THE HOUR OF CHAOS"





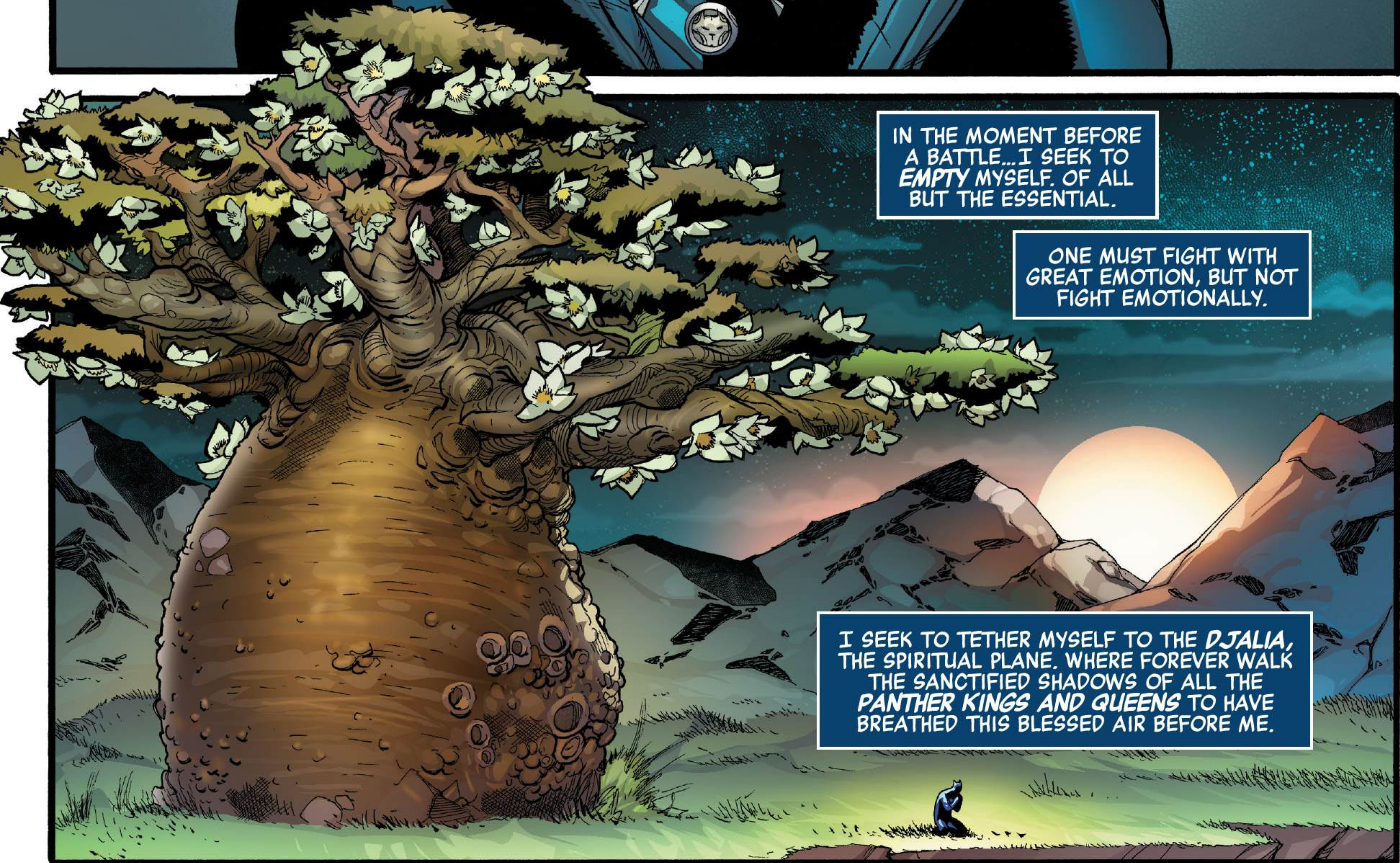
STEVEN IMPATIENTLY PUNCHES THE SCENERY.

THOR LAUGHS TO HIDE HIS BROODING.

CAROL BROODS TO HIDE HER LAUGHTER.

TONY ARMORS HIS FRAGILE EGO ONE EGOTISTICAL WORD AT A TIME.

WE ALL HAVE OUR ROUTINES.



IN THE MOMENT BEFORE A BATTLE...I SEEK TO **EMPTY** MYSELF. OF ALL BUT THE ESSENTIAL.

ONE MUST FIGHT WITH GREAT EMOTION, BUT NOT FIGHT EMOTIONALLY.

I SEEK TO TETHER MYSELF TO THE **DJALIA**, THE SPIRITUAL PLANE. WHERE FOREVER WALK THE SANCTIFIED SHADOWS OF ALL THE **PANTHER KINGS AND QUEENS** TO HAVE BREATHED THIS BLESSED AIR BEFORE ME.



THE AIR OF **WAKANDA**.

BUT MY CONNECTION TO THE **DJALIA** HAS BEEN SEVERED. AS HAVE ALL COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

I WAS PUT HERE, WITHIN **SIGHT** OF HOME, YET STILL SO FAR AWAY, TO REMIND ME THAT I AM WHOLLY THE **PRISONER OF THE PHOENIX**.



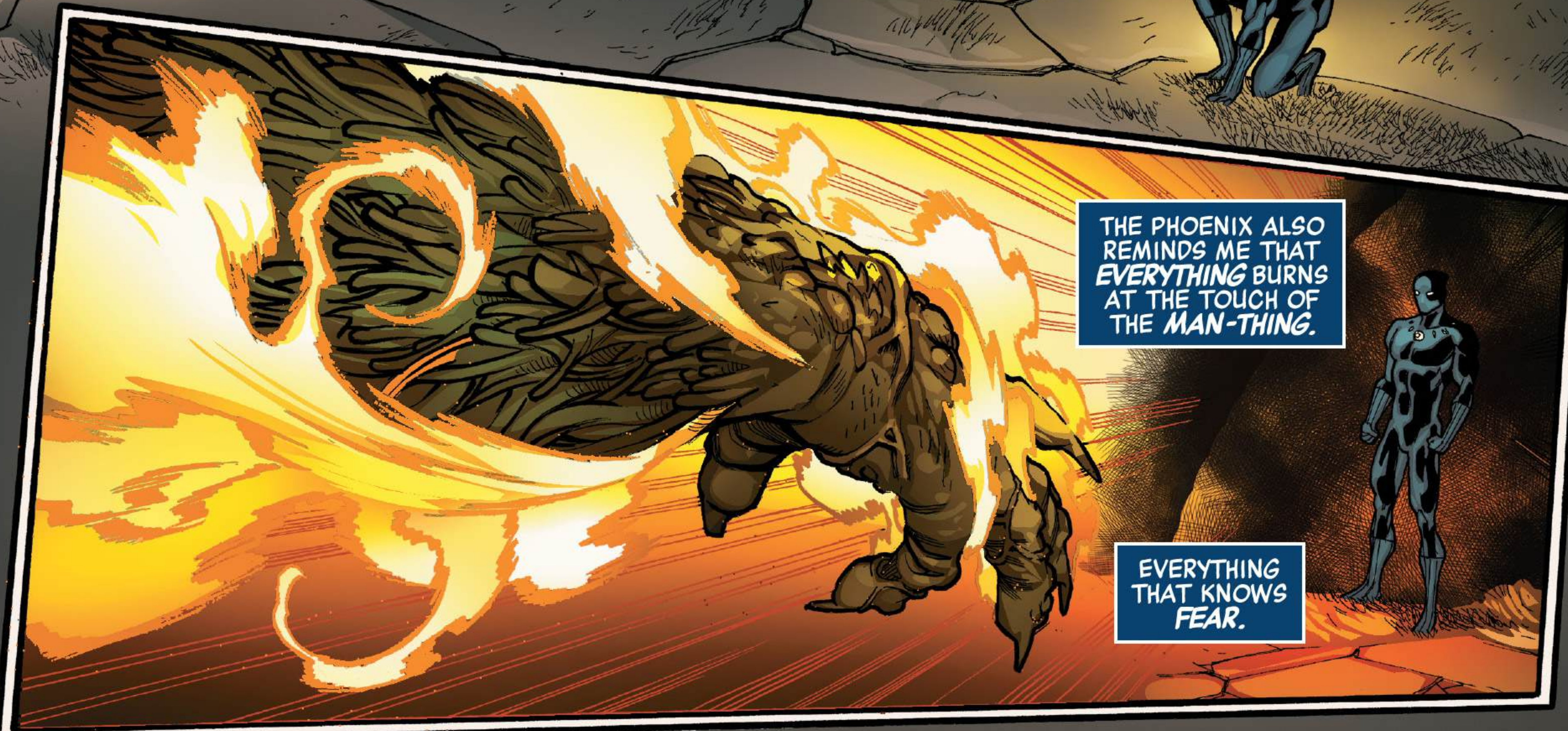
NOT EVEN MY **MIND** IS MY OWN. I CAN FEEL THE PHOENIX'S FIERY TALONS INVADING MY THOUGHTS.

"I AM COSMIC WILDFIRE INCARNATE," IT WHISPERS LIKE SEARING EMBERS INSIDE MY BRAIN. "YOUR MIND AND BODY ARE NAUGHT BUT **KINDLING**."

"AND IT IS NOT THE PLACE
OF KINDLING TO RESIST
THE CALL OF THE FLAME."



GET HRRROOR!



THE PHOENIX ALSO
REMINDS ME THAT
EVERYTHING BURNS
AT THE TOUCH OF
THE **MAN-THING**.

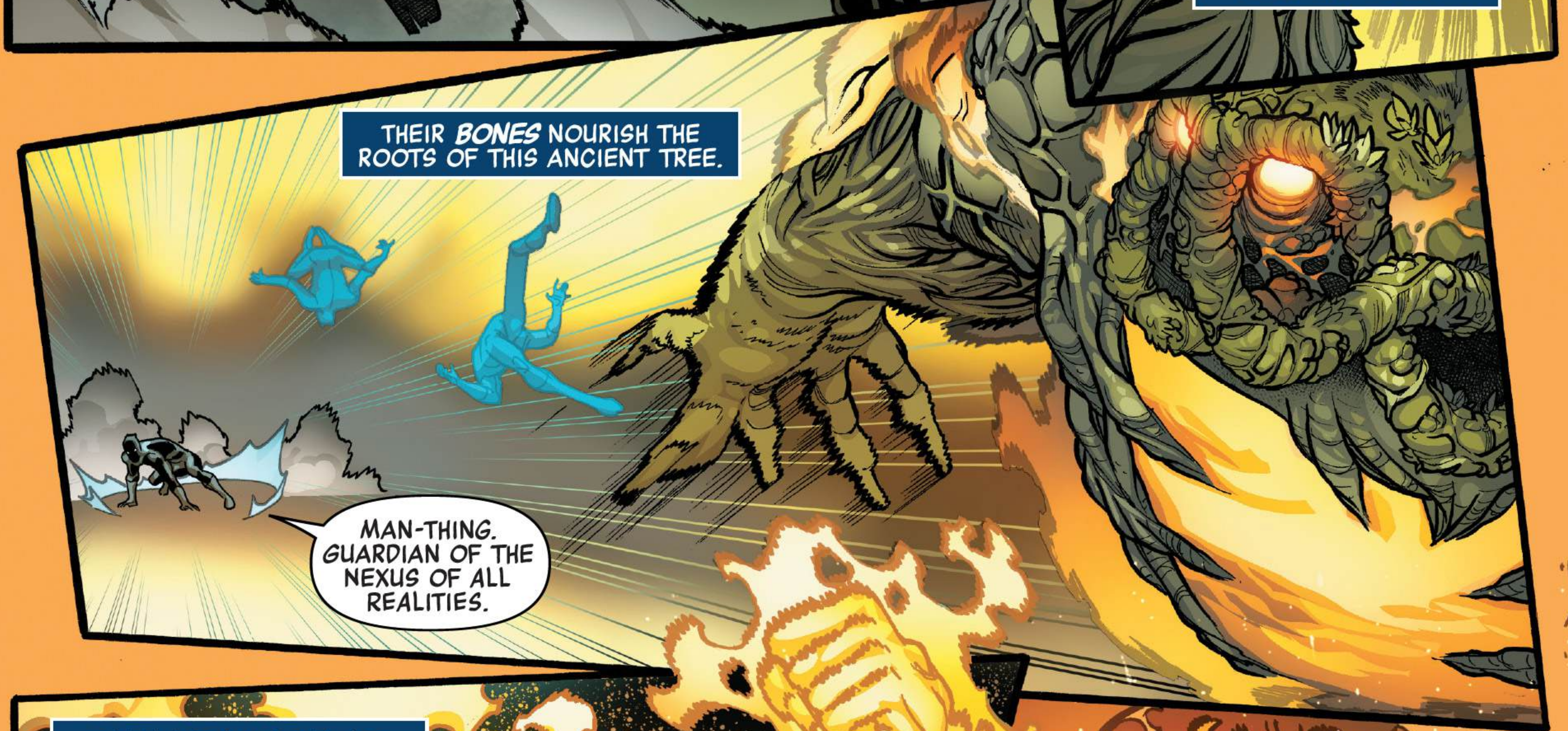


EVERYTHING
THAT KNOWS
FEAR.



MANY HAVE MISTAKEN
WAKANDA FOR KINDLING
OVER THE YEARS.

THEIR **BONES** NOURISH THE
ROOTS OF THIS ANCIENT TREE.



THE NIGHT SKY DOES NOT
FEAR THE SUN. FOR ONLY THE
DARKNESS IS ETERNAL.

I DID NOT ASK TO BE
CALLED TO THIS BATTLE.
BUT THE **BLACK PANTHER**
IS ONE OF THIS WORLD'S
PRIMORDIAL POWERS, THE
SAME AS THE FIREBIRD.

ONLY WE HAVE
NEVER LEFT. WE
PANTHERS HAVE
WATERED THIS
GROUND WITH
BLOOD, MUCH OF
IT OUR OWN, FOR
GENERATIONS.

YOU MAY BE
THE BLINKING
SUN, BUT WE
ARE THE ENDLESS
SEA OF NIGHT.
I AM NOT HERE
TO **RESIST** YOU,
PHOENIX.

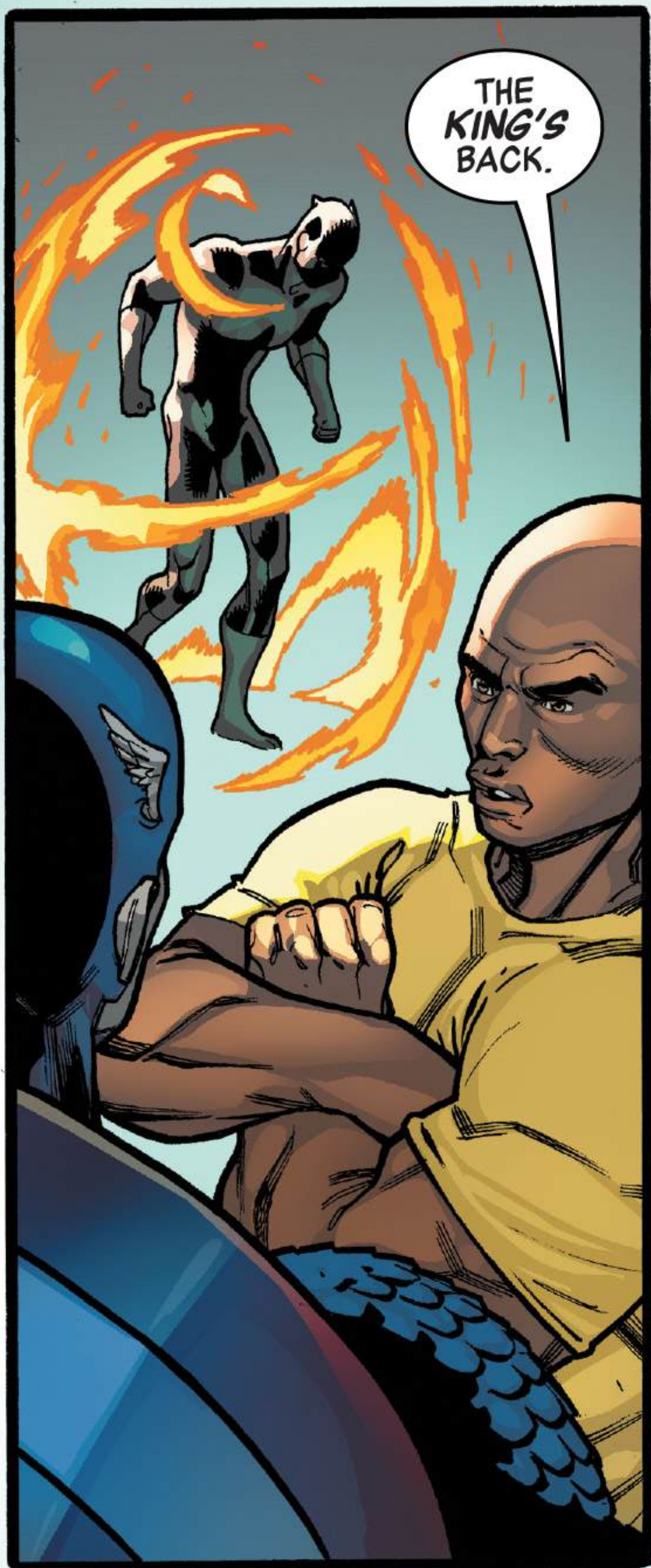
I AM
ALSO AN
ALLY OF YOUR
PROGENY.

I'M HERE
TO WIN.

MAY YOU
BOTH **FORGIVE**
ME FOR WHAT I
MUST DO.

MAY THE
BAOBAB
FORGIVE ME
AS WELL.

WELCOME TO
THE DAWN.



THE KING'S BACK.



AND THE MAN-TH--?

(AIN'T SAYING THAT NAME.)

THE OTHER GUY?

HE WILL... REGROW.

THE SAME DEAL AS DOOM AND ME? YOU WERE BOTH **POWERED UP** WITH A VESTIGE OF THE PHOENIX?

YES. IT WAS... EXHILARATING. **FRIGHTFULLY** SO.



SOME OF US TRIED EXPLORING THIS BIG **NOTHING** PLACE WHILE YOU WERE GONE.

BUT NO MATTER WHICH DIRECTION WE GO, EVEN STRAIGHT UP, WE ALWAYS END UP BACK HERE.

IT'S A DIMENSIONALLY TRANSCENDENTAL SPACE OF SOME SORT. TO KEEP US CONTAINED UNTIL IT'S OUR TURN TO DO BATTLE.

THE **BLACK KNIGHT'S** NO SAINT, BUT I'M NOT ABOUT TO FIGHT SOME 9-YEAR-OLD **MOON GIRL**. NOT EVEN ONE WITH HER OWN DINOSAUR.

WE CAN'T JUST SIT HERE AND LET SOME FIERY **SPACE DRAGON** TREAT US LIKE PLAYTHINGS.

WE SHOULD ASSUME OUR CAPTOR IS LISTENING TO EVERYTHING WE SAY. OR **THINK**. AS EASILY AS I'M READING YOUR LIPS.

ECHO'S RIGHT. WE'RE **INSIDE** THE PHOENIX.

I'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE. DURING MY OWN RUN-IN WITH THE PHOENIX FORCE. WHEN I WAS **THOR**.



WAIT, THAT WAS YOU? AM I CRAZY, OR DID YOU PUNCH ME IN THE FACE?

IT'S CALLED THE **WHITE HOT ROOM**.



AND WE
AIN'T SUPPOSED TO
BE HERE. THIS PLACE IS
RESERVED FOR **PHOENIX
WIELDERS**.

ANY OF YOU
GOT AIMS ON **JOINING**
'EM...WELL, WE MIGHT AS
WELL SKIP TO THE PART
WHERE I **STAB** YA A
BUNCH.

SAVE
THE THREATS,
LOGAN. NONE
OF US ASKED
FOR THIS.

AND I'M
AN ACTUAL
FOURTH GRADER!
I OWN **ROLLER
SKATES!**

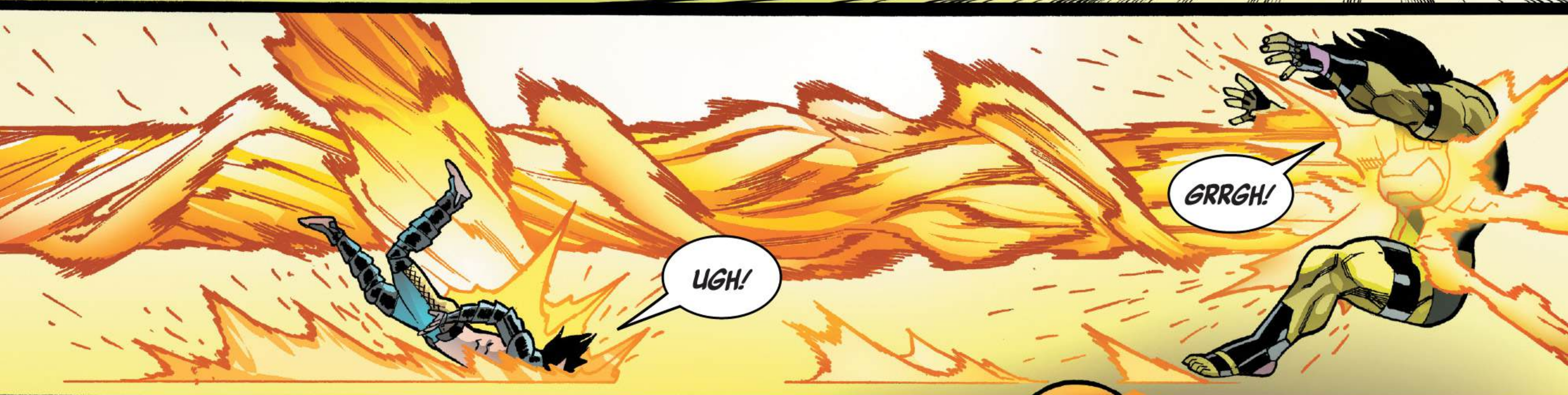
YOU'RE
WRONG,
CAP.

HE
SURE AS
HELL ASKED
FOR IT.

ENOUGH
WAITING!
**WHO WILL
IT BE?**

TELL ME
WHO I NEED
TO **SACRIFICE**,
AND IT WILL
BE DONE!

WHO WILL
BE FIRST TO
FALL TO
NAMOR?!



THE HIMALAYAS.
THE MYSTICAL CITY
OF K'UN-LUN.

PHOENIX MAN
AND IRON FIST:
HEROES FOR
HIRE.

DOES
HAVE A RING
TO IT.
BUT I
DON'T WANT
THIS CRAZY
DAMN SPACE
POWER.

YEAH?

WELL,
I DO!

IT'S NOT JUST OUR
FIGHTING PROWESS
THE PHOENIX SEEMS
TO BE GAUGING.
IT'S OUR *PASSION*.

AMERICAN EAGLE IS
A PROUD MEMBER OF
THE NAVAJO NATION.
HE WOULD DO ALMOST
ANYTHING TO BRING
POWER TO HIS PEOPLE.

PUNCHING LUKE CAGE'S BULLETPROOF
FACE HAS JUST BROKEN THREE OF
AMERICAN EAGLE'S KNUCKLES.

HE STILL
PUNCHES
HIM AGAIN.

AND
AGAIN.

THE BLUE AREA OF THE MOON.

SHANNA THE SHE-DEVIL,
QUEEN OF THE SAVAGE
LAND, HAS HUNTED MANY
FEARSOME CREATURES, GREAT
AND SMALL, IN HER LIFE.

BUT SHE WOULD NEVER DARE
FIGHT A CHILD. ESPECIALLY
NOT ONE AS ENDEARING AS
LUNELLA LAFAYETTE, THE
MOON GIRL, PERHAPS THE
SMARTEST PERSON ON THE
FACE OF THE EARTH.

BUT MOON GIRL'S
TIME-DISPLACED
DEVIL DINOSAUR
ON THE
OTHER HAND...



SUBTERRANEA.
MILES UNDERNEATH
THE SURFACE
OF THE EARTH.

THE EYE OF
THE **WATCHER**.
COMBINED WITH
THE POWER OF
THE **PHOENIX**.

I...I SEE
EVERYONE WHO'S
DYING RIGHT NOW...
ACROSS THE WHOLE
STINKING GALAXY.

HEH. YOU
MAYBE CAN'T
TELL... BUT I'M
SMILING.

AS
SOMEONE
WHO'S DIED
HERSELF...

...AND WHOSE
HONOR AND DUTY
IT IS, EVERY DAY, TO
BE THERE WITH OTHERS
FOR THEIR FINAL
SUFFERING...

...I CAN
ASSURE YOU THOSE
MOST VULNERABLE AND
INTIMATE OF MOMENTS
ARE NOT YOURS FOR
THE PEEP-SHOWING,
ORB.

BUT **THIS**
ONE SURE AS
HEL IS!

JANE FOSTER HAS
SHOWN HERSELF MORE THAN
CAPABLE OF CARRYING ON
CENTURIES-OLD LEGACIES,
AS A GODDESS OF THUNDER
AND NOW A **VALKYRIE**.

BUT THE **PHOENIX** IS NOT
A WEAPON TO SIMPLY
BE WIELDED AND SET ASIDE.
WITH THE GREAT POWER OF THE
PHOENIX MUST ALSO COME...

CRASH

...GREAT CONSEQUENCES.

SUCH
AWESOME
POWER! STANDS
TO REASON I
WAS CALLED!

**WUNDAGORE
MOUNTAIN.**

ONLY THE
STRONGEST
MEMBER OF THE
SQUADRON SUPREME
DESERVES TO WIELD
MIGHT SUCH AS
THIS!

YIELD,
LITTLE MAN!
YOU HAD NO HOPE
OF DEFEATING
HYPERION BEFORE,
LET ALONE
NOW!

I FEEL MY
SUPER-SENSES
EXPANDING...TO
INFINITY!

I FEEL
THE COSMOS
ITSELF COURSE
THROUGH MY
VEINS!

I CAN HEAR...
MORE LANGUAGES
THAN I CAN COUNT!
AS MANY RACES AS
THERE ARE STARS, ALL
LAUGHING, CRYING,
WHISPERING THEIR
LOVE TO ONE
ANOTHER!

IT IS
A UNIVERSE...
TEEMING WITH LIFE!
WITH **REBIRTH!**
WITH SUCH...

NO.



THIS WILL...
CHANGE ME!
EXPAND MY MIND
IN WAYS I
COULD'VE NEVER
IMAGINED!

I CANNOT
BE THIS...THIS
OPEN-MINDED!



I YIELD!
PLEASE, JUST
MAKE IT STOP!

SHANG-CHI IS A
MASTER OF MANY
FIGHTING ARTS.

INCLUDING THE
ART OF FIGHTING
WITHOUT FIGHTING.

IN WHAT UNIQUE WAYS
WOULD HE CHANNEL
AND MANIFEST A POWER
LIKE THE PHOENIX? WHAT
WOULD HE BECOME?

WHAT DARK PRICE WOULD HE BE FORCED TO PAY?

GREENWICH VILLAGE. DOCTOR STRANGE'S KITCHEN.

THIS IS...
SOME FORM
OF HUMOR
PERHAPS?

NAH,
TOOTS.

THIS IS A
RECKONING
A LONG TIME
COMING IS WHAT
IT IS!

NONE OF
YOU HAIRLESS
APES ARE GONNA
BE LAUGHING AT
OLD HOWARD THE
DUCK NOW!

THIS'LL BE
EVEN BIGGER
THAN THAT TIME
I RAN FOR
PRESI--

THE RED WIDOW
IS A PRODUCT OF
RUSSIA'S NOTORIOUS
RED ROOM.

THE BRUTAL
BLAST FURNACE
WHERE MOSCOW'S
DEADLIEST
ASSASSINS
ARE FORGED.

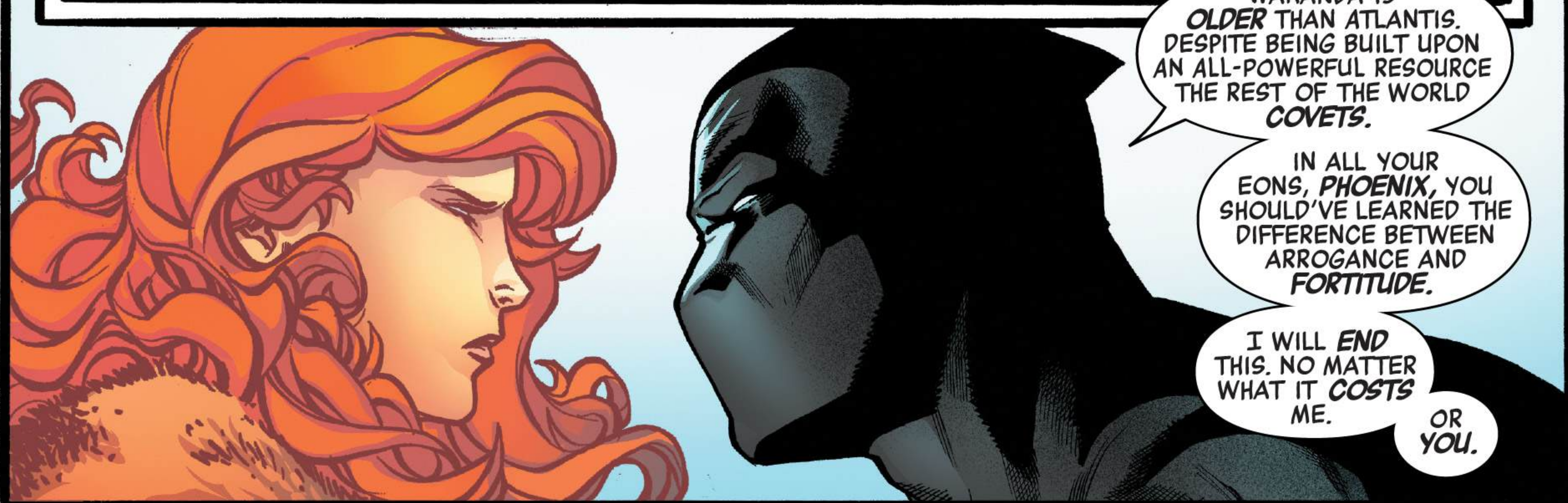
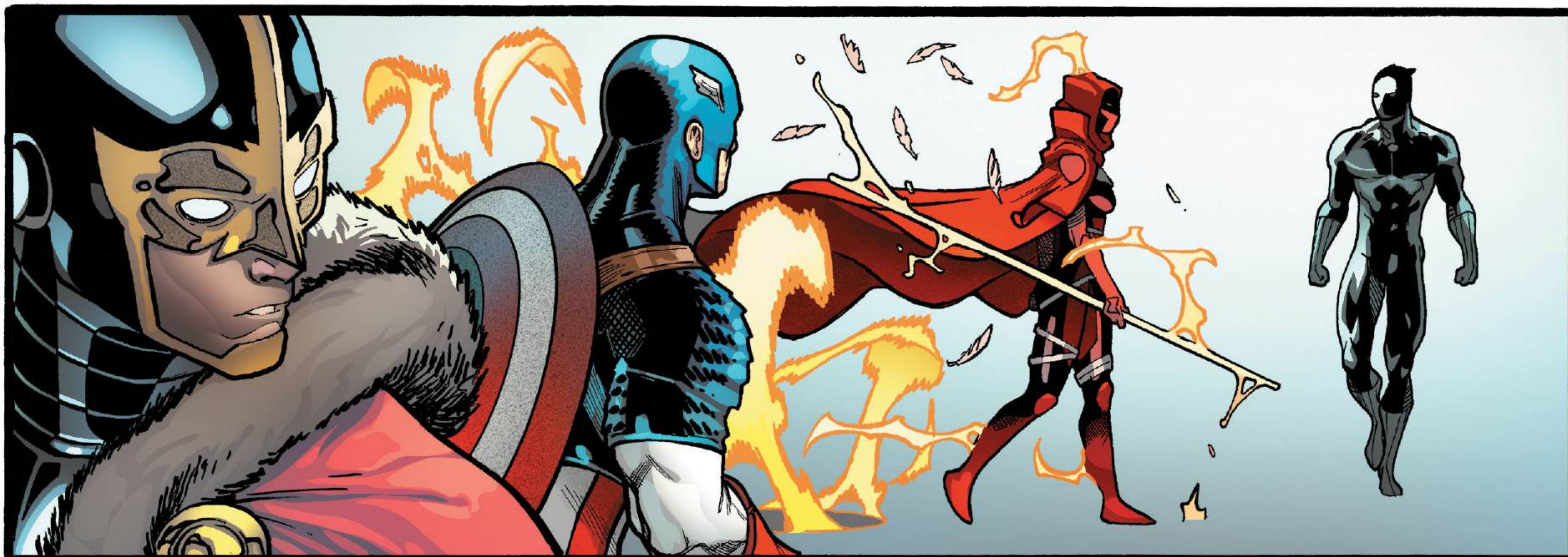
WAAUGH!

THE DAY SHE WAS BROUGHT
IN FOR TRAINING, SEEING
THAT SHE HAD A BED AND
ENOUGH FOOD TO EAT FOR
THE FIRST TIME IN HER LIFE...

...SHE SMILED.

SHE WAS
BEATEN AND
STARVED FOR
MANY WEEKS
FOR THAT
SMILE.

THE RED
WIDOW WAS 7
YEARS OLD.





OH, I BELIEVE YOU, BUT I HAVE NO SAY IN THESE PROCEEDINGS. I AM BUT A HOST OF OLD. A *GHOST* ENJOYING THE ENDLESS NOTHINGNESS OF HER ETERNAL REWARD.

BUT I HAVE BEEN SENT FROM THE *BEAK* OF THE BIRD WITH AN *OFFER*.

IT'S *YOU* SHE WANTS, T'CHALLA.



GIVE YOURSELF TO HER, AND SHE PROMISES TO *BURN* THE NAME OF WAKANDA *ACROSS THE STARS*.

TRY TO *FIGHT* HER?

AND SHE'LL BURN IT TO *ASH*.

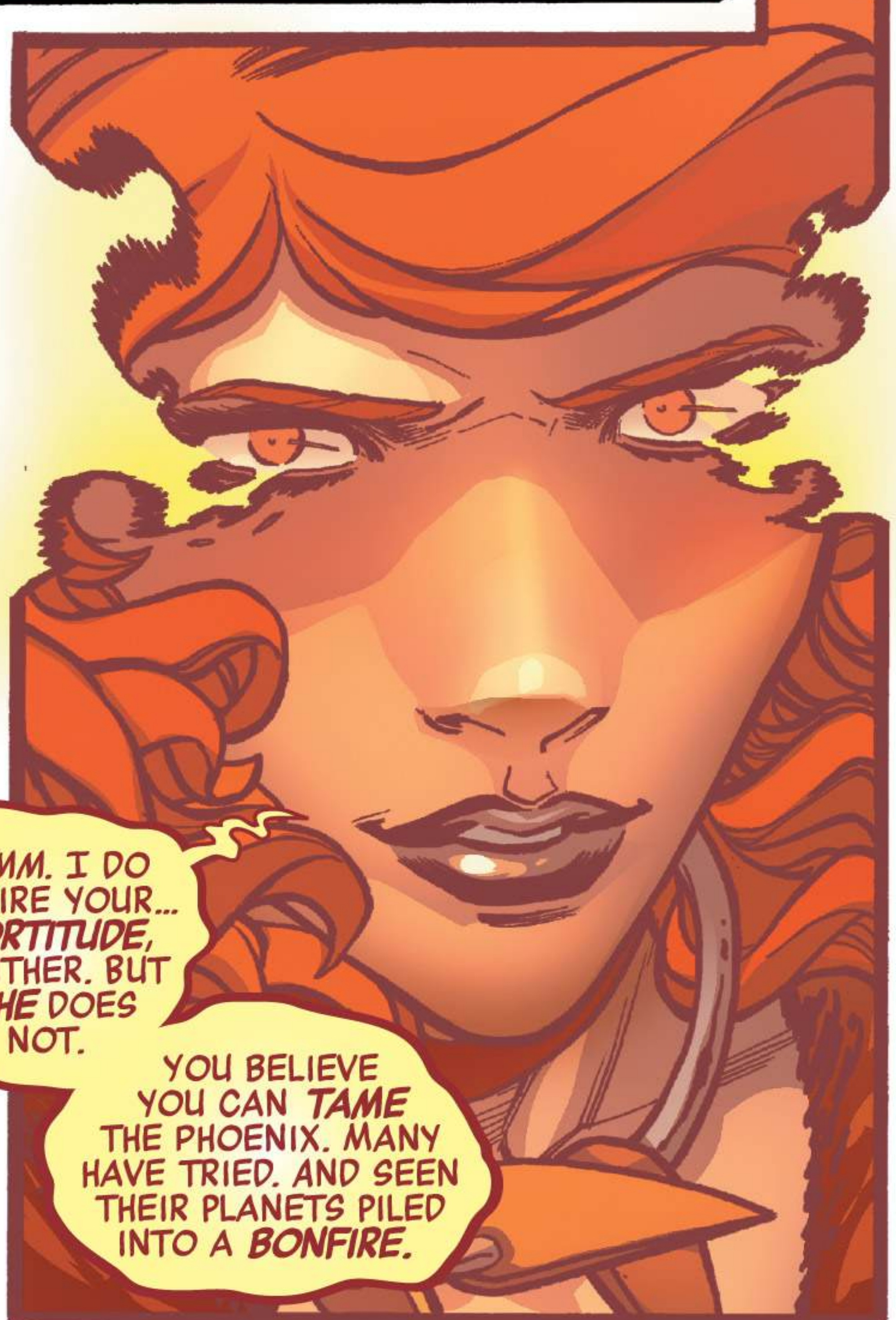


THAT IS NOT AN OFFER. *HERE* IS AN OFFER.

YOU HAVE FOUGHT IN *DEFENSE* OF THIS PLANET IN THE PAST. SHOW ME YOU CAN DO SO AGAIN, AND I WILL *SPARE* YOUR LIFE.

BUT CONTINUE TO TREAT THE PEOPLE OF THIS WORLD AS YOURS FOR THE BURNING... AND I WILL NOT BE SO MERCIFUL.

I WILL SHOW YOU, PHOENIX, HOW A *PANTHER*... DEALS WITH A *BUZZARD*.



MMM. I DO ADMIRE YOUR... *FORTITUDE*, PANTHER. BUT *SHE* DOES NOT.

YOU BELIEVE YOU CAN *TAME* THE PHOENIX. MANY HAVE TRIED. AND SEEN THEIR PLANETS PILED INTO A *BONFIRE*.



TELL ME... HOW DOES A PANTHER DEAL WITH A BUZZARD...

...WHEN THE BIRD IS FEEDING ON ITS CORPSE?



HIS ROYAL
HIGHNESS.
ALREADY SENT
OUT TO FIGHT
AGAIN.

FLORIDA EVERGLADES.
THE NEXUS OF ALL REALITIES.



YOU
MUST'VE
REALLY *PISSED*
HER OFF.

NIGHTHAWK.

GIVEN THE
MILITANT NATIONALIST
PATH YOUR *SQUADRON*
SUPREME OF AMERICA
HAS BEEN ON, I SUPPOSE
THIS CONFRONTATION
WAS *INEVITABLE*.



NO
MORE GAMES,
T'CHALLA.

WE
BOTH KNOW
THIS FIGHT OF
OURS STARTED
WEEKS AGO.

YOU MEAN
WHEN YOU WERE
APPOINTED THE
AMERICAN *AMBASSADOR*
TO WAKANDA, IN YOUR
SECRET CIVILIAN IDENTITY
OF *CONGRESSMAN*
KYLE RICHMOND?

I'D HAVE
BEEN QUITE
DISAPPOINTED
IF YOU HADN'T
KNOWN THAT.

BUT DID
YOU KNOW MY
LIFE MODEL DECOY
IS DRAWING UP NEW
TARIFFS ON WAKANDA
AS WE SPEAK?

I'M AFRAID
I PROGRAMMED
HIM TO BE QUITE
INTRANSIGENT.



IF YOUR COMMS
WEREN'T DOWN, I
BELIEVE YOU'D FIND
YOUR LMD CALLED
IN *SICK* TODAY.

IN WAKANDA,
EVEN OUR *GRADE
SCHOOL* CHILDREN CAN
HACK INTO YOUR
GOVERNMENT'S *ROXXON-*
MADE DEFENSE
TECHNOLOGY.

IT'S WHAT
THEY DO INSTEAD
OF *RECESS*.



OH YES, I
KNOW. I'VE
ALREADY HAD YOUR
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
CLASSIFIED AS CENTERS
FOR *CYBER-*
TERRORISM.

AFTER THIS
LATEST ATTACK,
I EXPECT THE WHITE
HOUSE WILL OFFICIALLY
RECOGNIZE YOUR
ENTIRE COUNTRY
FOR WHAT IT IS.

AND SANCTION
MY SQUADRON TO
TOPPLE YOUR LITTLE
BACKWOODS, SOCIALIST,
EVIL EMPIRE ONCE
AND FOR ALL.



DO YOU
KNOW HOW MANY
LOBBYISTS A LITERAL
MOUNTAIN OF *VIBRANIUM*
CAN BUY? WITH HOUSE
BUDGET HEARINGS
IMMINENT, YOU'RE
ABOUT TO FIND OUT,
CONGRESSMAN.

YOUR
SQUADRON
WILL NOT SURVIVE
THE *FISCAL*
QUARTER.



WELL, THEN.
IT WOULD APPEAR
WE ARE AT A
STALEMATE.

IF
YOU SAY
SO.

I SUPPOSE
THAT MEANS...

...WE'LL JUST
HAVE TO *BEAT*
THE LIVING HELL
OUT OF EACH
OTHER.



ONE MUST FIGHT WITH
GREAT EMOTION, BUT
NOT FIGHT EMOTIONALLY.

BUT THE PHOENIX FANS
THE EMBERS OF OUR
DARKEST EMOTIONS INTO
A RAGING INFERNO.

AN INFERNO
THAT COULD PUT
AN ENTIRE GALAXY
TO THE TORCH.

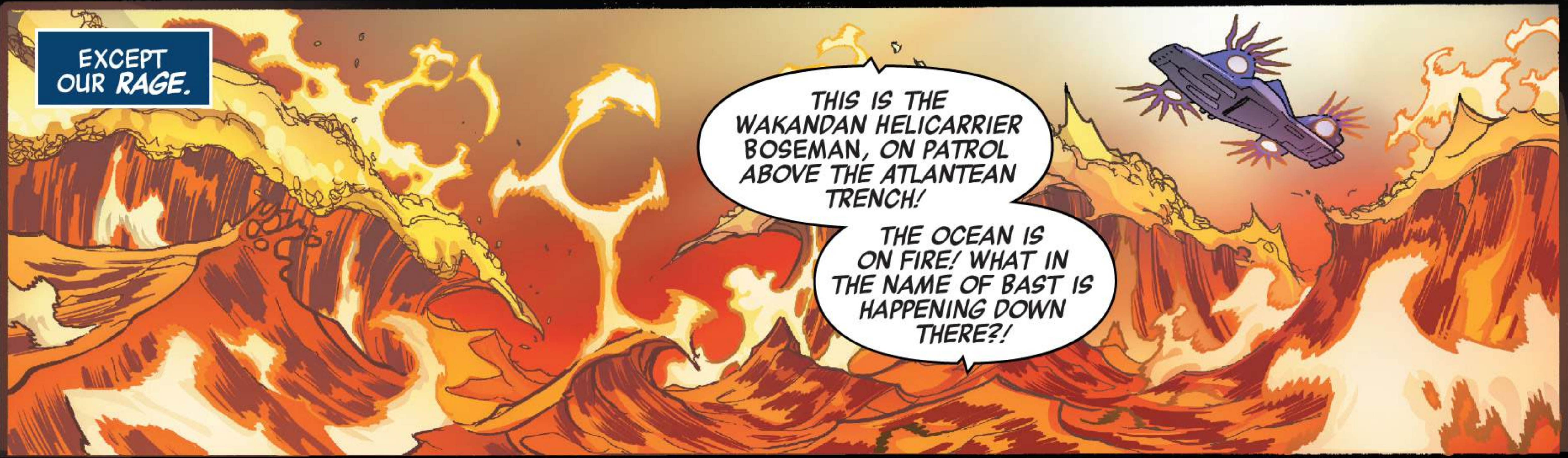
I TELL MYSELF
I CAN TAME
THE FIREBIRD.

THAT I AM THE CAVEMAN
PANTHER WITH GLOWING
ROCKS WHO CAN FELL A
GOD IF NEED BE.

AND IN RETURN, I HEAR
THE BIRD LAUGH INSIDE
MY HEAD, WITH THE
VOICES OF A THOUSAND
FOOLS JUST LIKE ME.

ITS WORK IS FAR EASIER.
IT DOESN'T NEED TO
BREAK ME. OR ANY OF US
WHO'VE BEEN FORCED TO
ENTER THE PHOENIX.

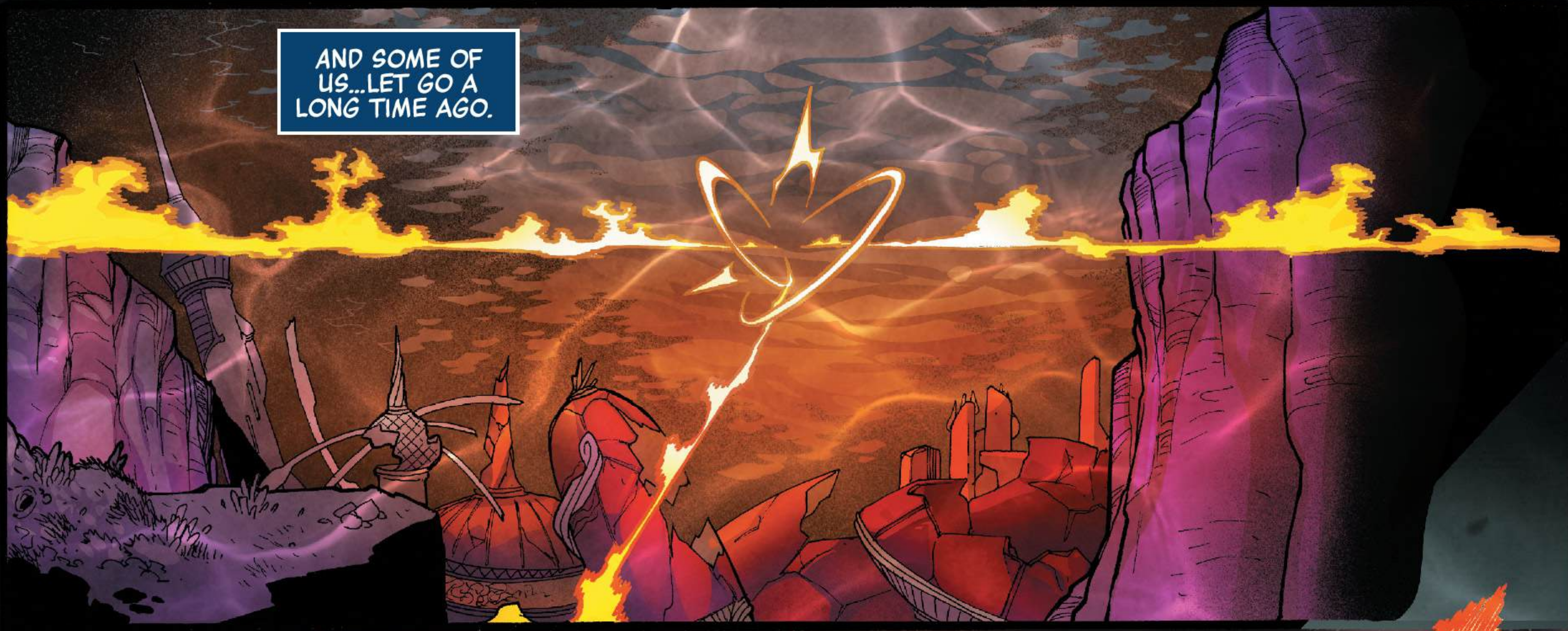
IT ONLY NEEDS TO
PUSH US TO THE
POINT THAT WE LET
GO...OF EVERYTHING...



EXCEPT
OUR RAGE.

THIS IS THE
WAKANDAN HELICARRIER
BOSEMAN, ON PATROL
ABOVE THE ATLANTIC TRENCH!

THE OCEAN IS
ON FIRE! WHAT IN
THE NAME OF BAST IS
HAPPENING DOWN
THERE?!



AND SOME OF
US...LET GO A
LONG TIME AGO.



MAYA LOPEZ
KNOWS ABOUT
RAGE.

AND WITH HER ABILITY
TO ECHO ANY FIGHTING
STYLE SHE'S EVER SEEN,
SHE'S MORE THAN A MATCH
FOR ALMOST ANYONE.

BUT SHE'S NOT
USED TO FIGHTING
ON THE BOTTOM
OF THE SEA.

A full-page comic book illustration of Namor of Atlantis. He is depicted in a state of intense rage, with his mouth wide open in a scream and his eyes narrowed. He has spiky, flame-like blonde hair and is wearing his signature black and gold Atlantean armor. He is surrounded by a massive, swirling vortex of fire and energy, with bright orange and yellow flames radiating outwards. The background is dark with streaks of light, emphasizing the chaotic and powerful nature of the scene.

ESPECIALLY AGAINST
SOMEONE WHO WAS
BORN THERE.

NAMOR OF ATLANTIS
KNOWS RAGE, LIKE HE
KNOWS BREATHING
BENEATH THE WAVES.

AND
HE KNOWS
MURDER.

AND BEFORE
THIS FIGHT IS
THROUGH...

...MAYA LOPEZ
WILL BE WITNESS
TO *BOTH.*

42 ENTER THE PHOENIX PART 3
"BE LIKE FIRE"



THE ATLANTIC OCEAN. TWO THOUSAND FATHOMS DEEP.

WHEN I WAS
A CHILD...

...BARELY OLD
ENOUGH TO GO
FOR SWIMS ON
MY OWN...

...I MURDERED
A SHARK.

A BULL SHARK. MUCH BIGGER
THAN ME. I DRAGGED IT TO
THE SURFACE AND HURLED IT
ONTO THE ROCKS.

THEN WATCHED IT
FLOP AND SMOTHER.

MY MOTHER FOUND ME,
DEMANDING TO KNOW WHY,
ANGRILY ASKING IF I'D
RATHER LIVE ON THE
SURFACE WITH MY FATHER...

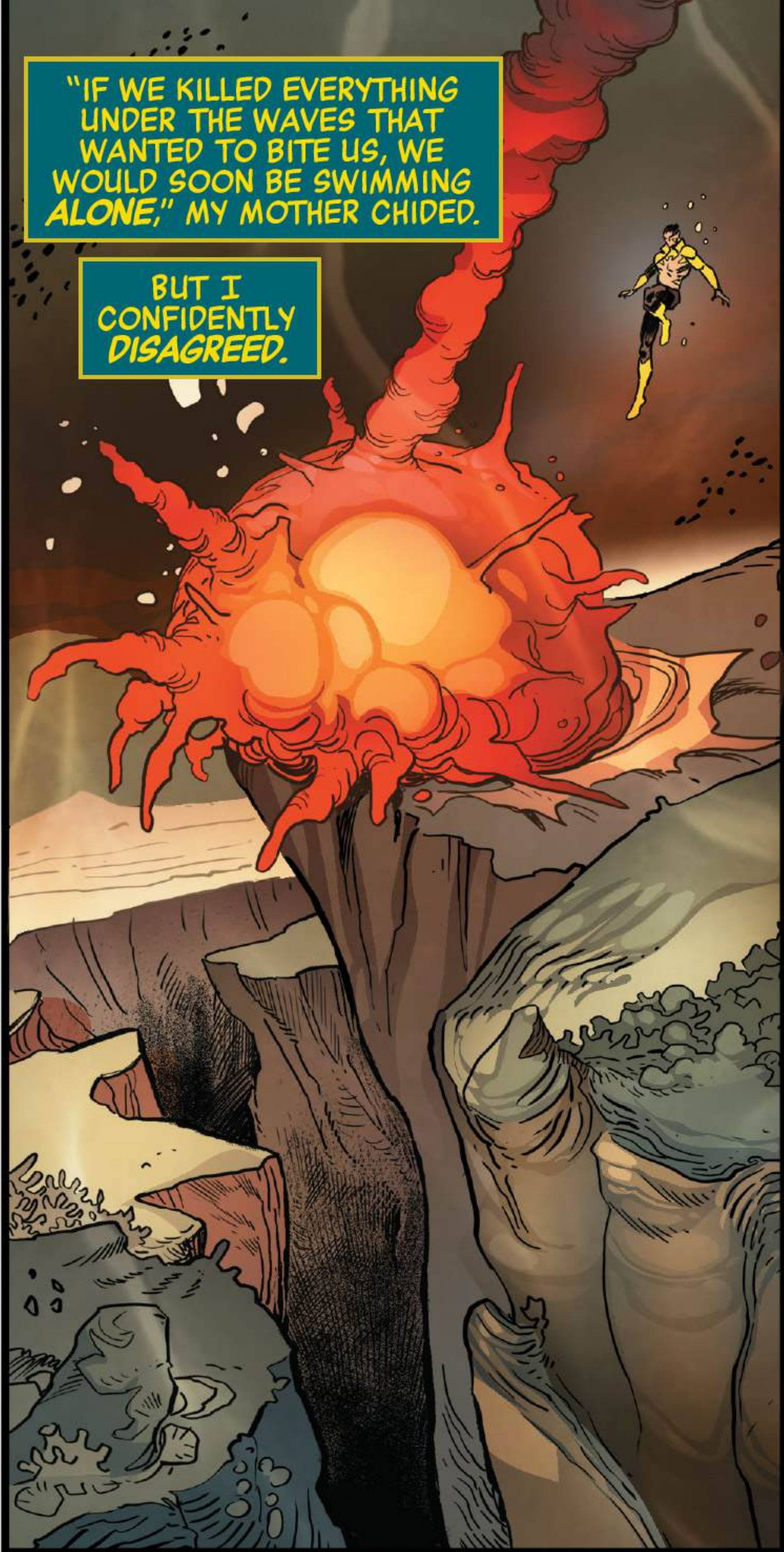
...WHERE MEN KILLED NOT
TO FEED THEMSELVES OR
THEIR TRIBE BUT FOR NO
DISCERNIBLE REASON AT ALL.

"THE SHARK
TRIED TO
BITE ME"...

...I LIED.

"IF WE KILLED EVERYTHING UNDER THE WAVES THAT WANTED TO BITE US, WE WOULD SOON BE SWIMMING ALONE," MY MOTHER CHIDED.

BUT I CONFIDENTLY DISAGREED.



"AFTER I'VE KILLED A FEW, EVERYTHING IN THE DEEP WILL LEARN TO SWIM CLEAR OF PRINCE NAMOR."



MY MOTHER BEAMED WITH PRIDE, AND SALUTED ME AS A PROUD ATLANTEAN.



SHE HAD ME CARRY THE SHARK'S BODY INTO THE DEPTHS ALONE.

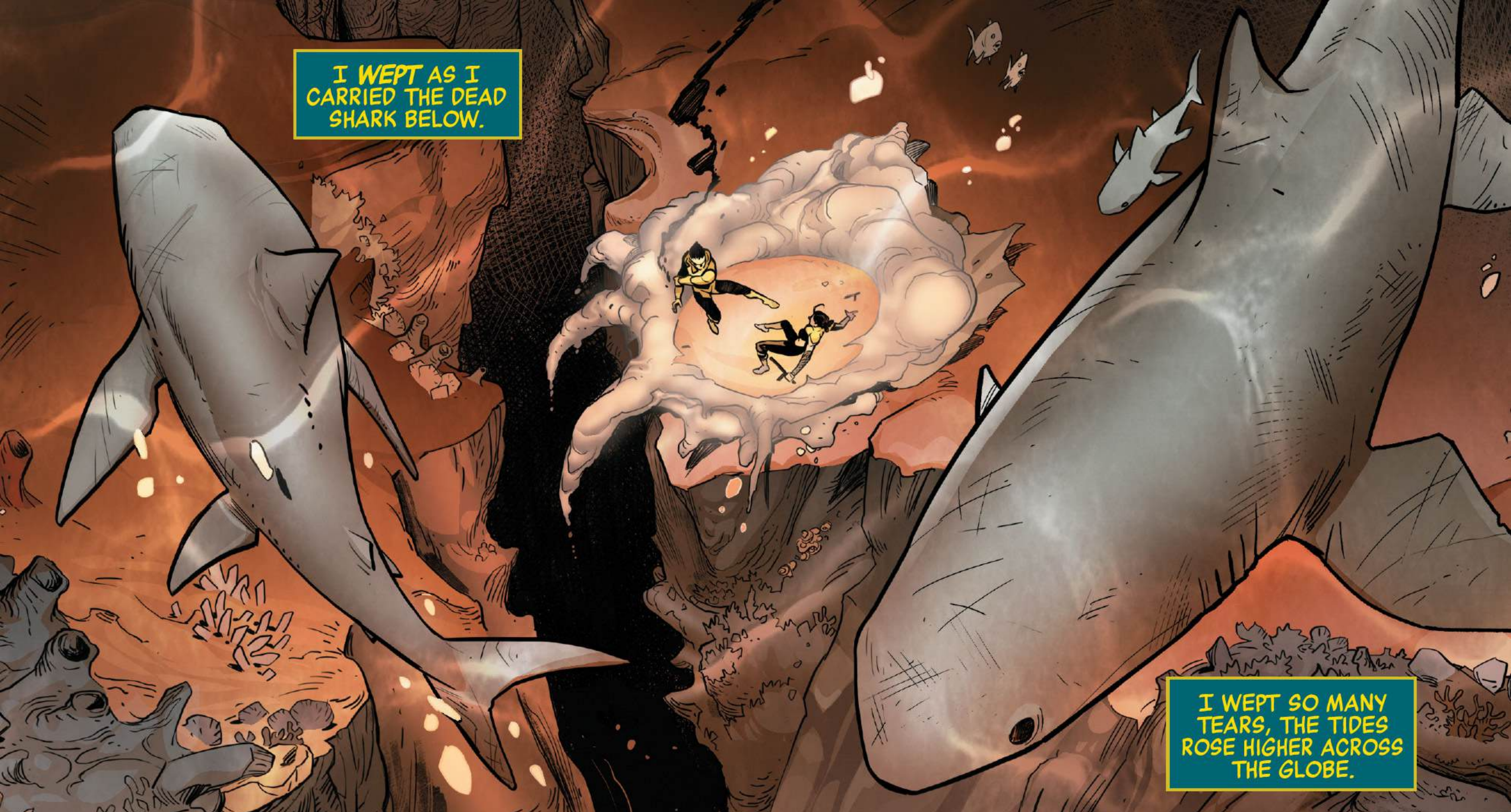


IT WAS HEAVY IN MY ARMS.



BUT NOT AS HEAVY AS MY HEART.





I WEPT AS I
CARRIED THE DEAD
SHARK BELOW.

I WEPT SO MANY
TEARS, THE TIDES
ROSE HIGHER ACROSS
THE GLOBE.



AND AS I WATCHED THE
SHARK SINK TO THE OCEAN
FLOOR, WHERE HUNGRY
CRABS AND BARRACUDAS
WAITED, I LET MY
LAST TEAR FALL WITH IT.



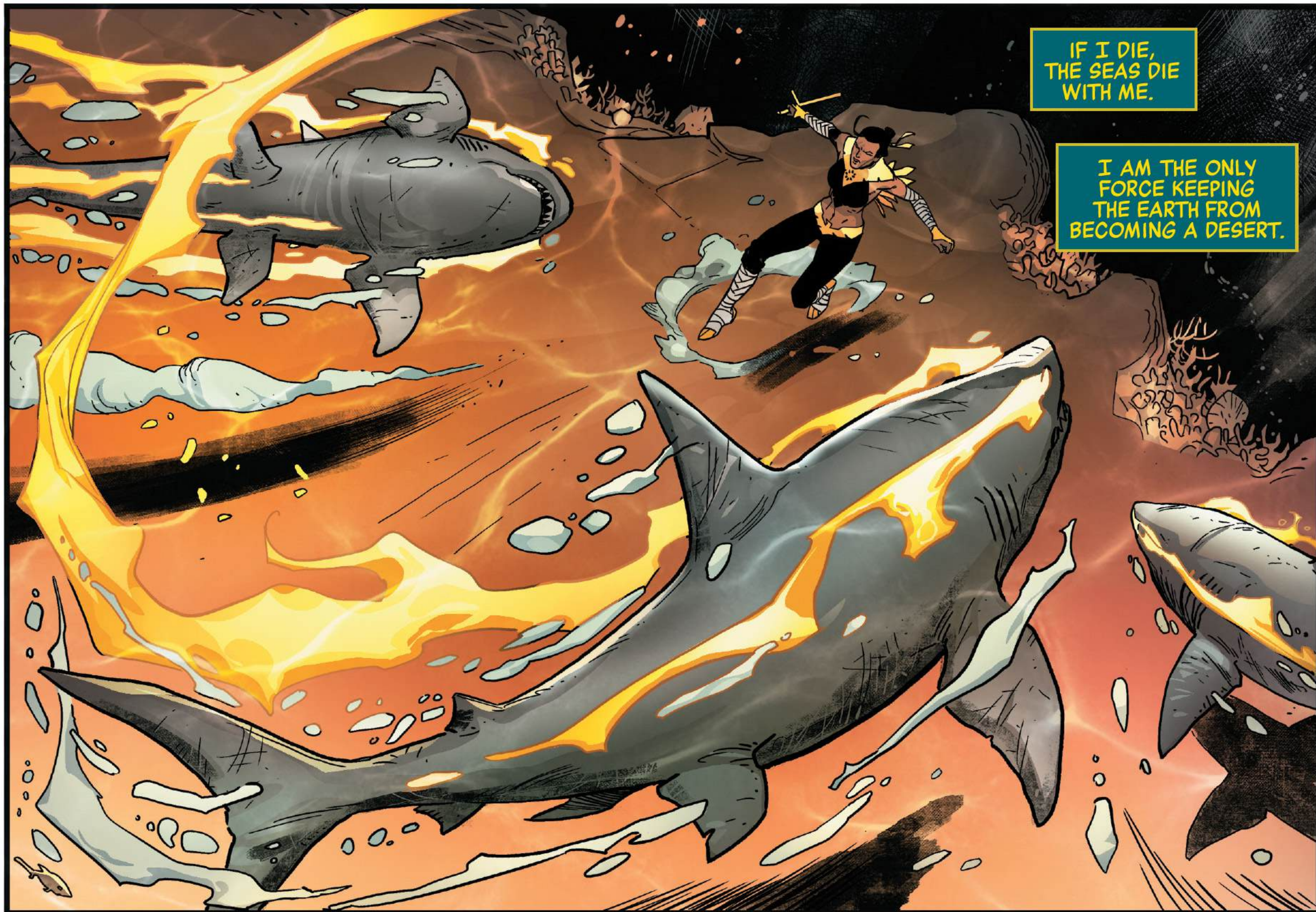
THE LAST TEAR THE
FUTURE KING OF
ATLANTIS WOULD
EVER SHED.



THOUGH THE SHARK WAS
FAR FROM THE LAST
THING I WOULD KILL
BENEATH THESE WAVES...

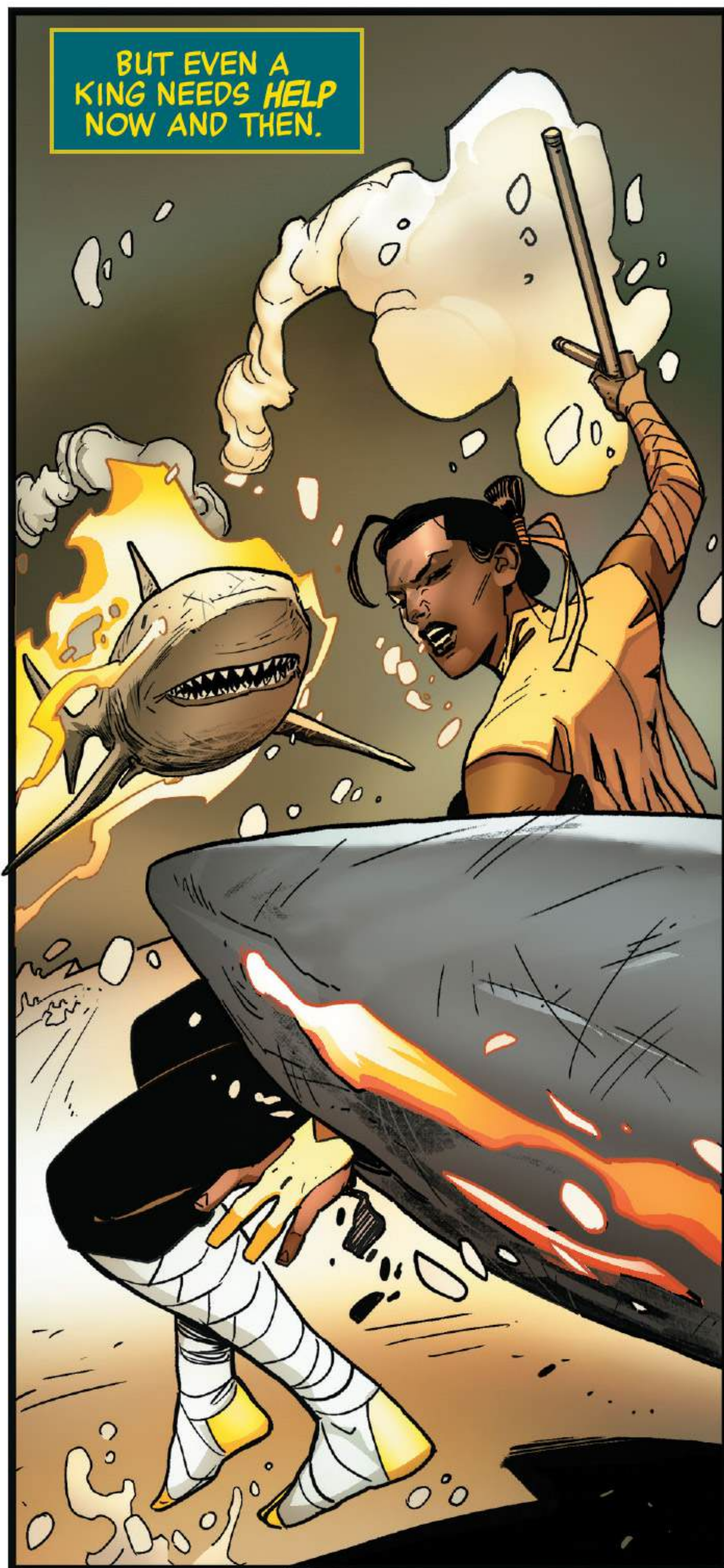


...TO ENSURE NOTHING EVER
EVEN THOUGHT ABOUT
SINKING ITS TEETH INTO ME.



IF I DIE,
THE SEAS DIE
WITH ME.

I AM THE ONLY
FORCE KEEPING
THE EARTH FROM
BECOMING A DESERT.



BUT EVEN A
KING NEEDS *HELP*
NOW AND THEN.



I NEED THE POWER
OF THE *STARS*.
NOT TO SET THE
AIR-BREATHERS ON
FIRE. NOT ALL OF
THEM, AT LEAST.



ALL I MUST
DO IS HOLD
THEM AT BAY...
KEEP THEM
FLOPPING AND
GASPING ON
THE SUNBAKED
ROCKS...



...AS THEY
SMOTHER
THEMSELVES.

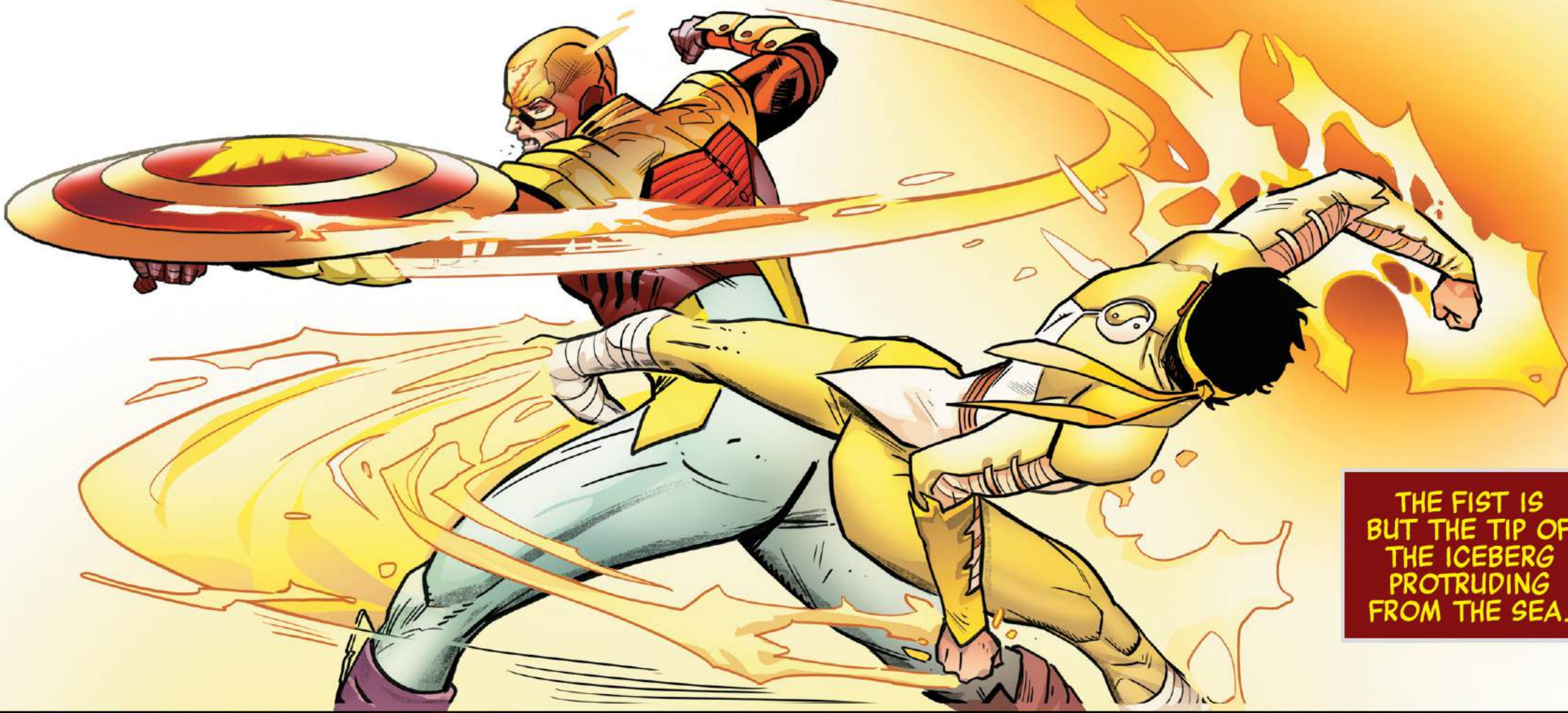
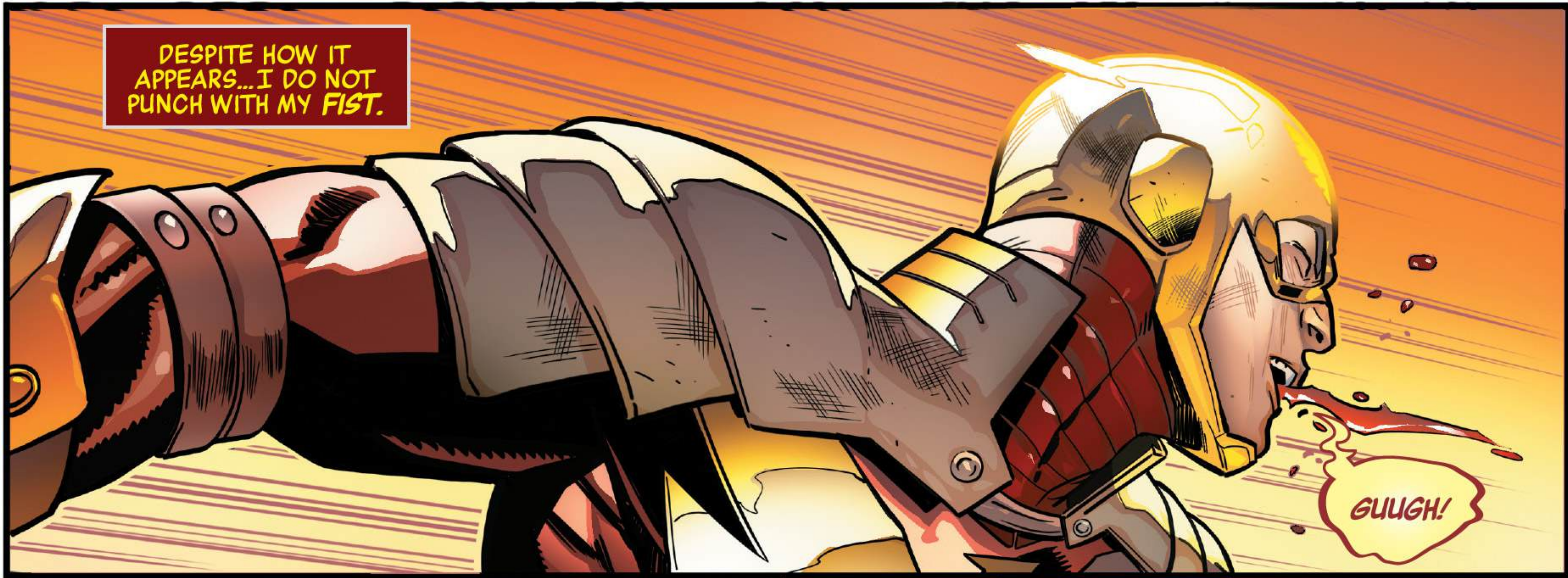


I AM **NAMOR**
OF ATLANTIS.

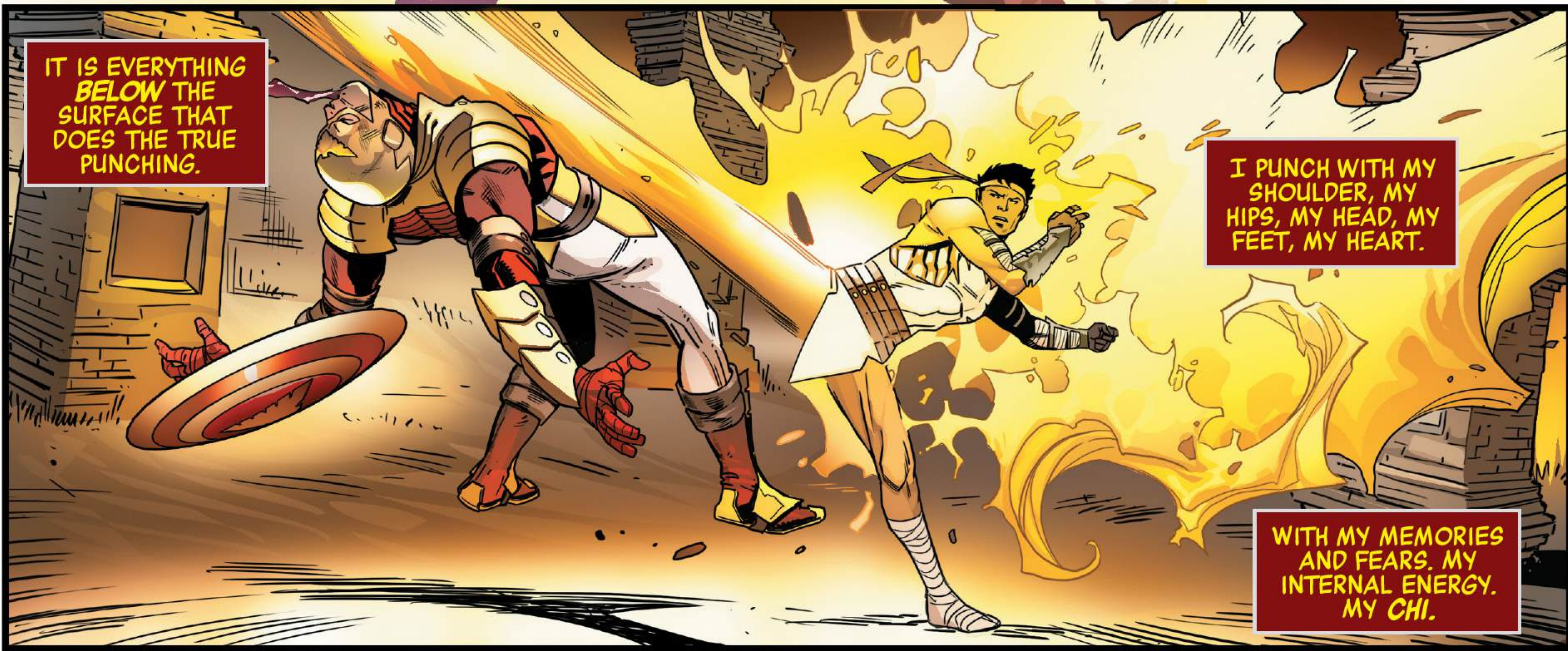
LORD OF THE
SEVEN SEAS.

AND SOON
TO BE KING OF
THE HEAVENS.

I WILL BE
THE ONE TRUE
PHOENIX.



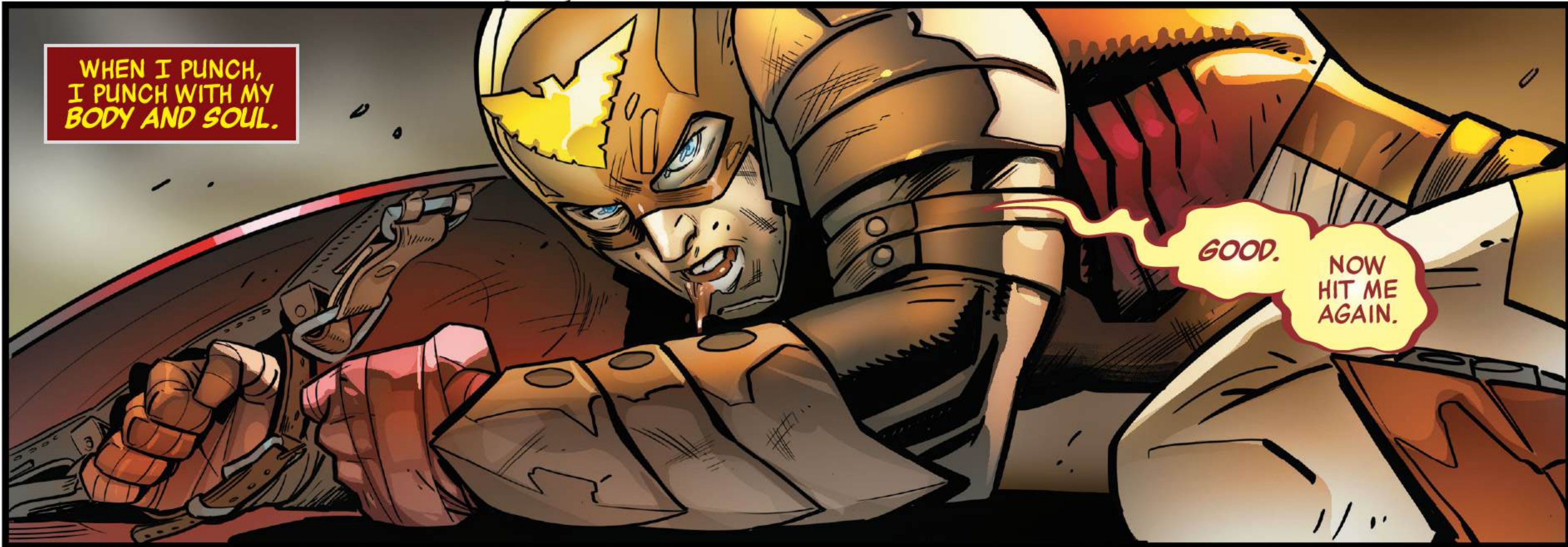
THE FIST IS BUT THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG PROTRUDING FROM THE SEA.



IT IS EVERYTHING **BELOW** THE SURFACE THAT DOES THE TRUE PUNCHING.

I PUNCH WITH MY SHOULDER, MY HIPS, MY HEAD, MY FEET, MY HEART.

WITH MY MEMORIES AND FEARS. MY INTERNAL ENERGY. MY **CHI**.



**HENAN
PROVINCE,
CHINA.**
THE SHAOLIN
MONASTERY,
WHERE KUNG FU
WAS BORN.

THAT IS A PUNCH THAT TAKES
MANY YEARS TO LEARN. THE
TRAINING IS MOST RIGOROUS.

I AM STILL
UNSURE ABOUT
THIS, CAPTAIN. I
HAVE NO DESIRE
TO FIGHT YOU.

YEAH,
BELIEVE ME,
SHANG-CHI, THE
FEELING'S
MUTUAL.

BUT THE PHOENIX
ISN'T GIVING US MUCH
OF AN OPTION. IT'S
DETERMINED TO CHOOSE
SOMEBODY TO BE ITS
NEW AVATAR.



I DO PUSH-UPS ON MY
KNUCKLES. MY FINGERTIPS.
GRIND MY FISTS
IN BROKEN GLASS.

AND WHILE
THOSE OF US WHO'VE
BEEN CALLED HAVE SPENT
A LOT OF TIME FOCUSED
ON WHO WE DEFINITELY
DON'T WANT THAT TO BE,
WE HAVEN'T TALKED
ABOUT WHO IT
SHOULD BE.

I PUNCH BOARDS AND
CONCRETE BLOCKS
AND WEAR OUT WING
CHUN WOODEN MEN.

AND I PUNCH **MYSELF**
AS WELL. DEEP INSIDE.
UNTIL MY SUBCONSCIOUS
IS A HARDENED MASS
OF SCAR TISSUE.



I KNOW
THIS ISN'T A
FAIR ASK. WE'VE
ALL SEEN WHAT
THE PHOENIX
TENDS TO DO TO
PEOPLE IT
POSSESSES.

BUT UNTIL
WE CAN FIGURE
OUT A WAY TO
STOP THIS WHOLE
CRAZY TOURNAMENT,
WE HAVE TO BE
PREPARED FOR THE
OUTCOME.

THERE IS NO PART
OF ME THAT CAN
BE ALLOWED TO
BE VULNERABLE.
UNMUSCLED.
UNTEMPERED.

SHANG-CHI,
YOU'RE ONE OF THE
MOST GIFTED FIGHTERS
I'VE EVER SEEN. AND FOR
ME, THAT COVERS A
LOT OF GROUND.

I BELIEVE
IN YOU. AND I'M
HERE TO HELP YOU
TRAIN. TO **CONTROL**
THIS POWER. AND
TO **WIN** THIS
FIGHT.

**THAT IS HOW YOU
MUST PUNCH.**



THAT IS
HOW TO BE
LIKE **FIRE.**

NOW
PUNCH ME IN
THE FACE WITH
THE PHOENIX.





FIRE BURNS
AND CONSUMES.
LAYS WASTE.



IN THE SAME SPIRIT,
I MUST HARNESS THE
FIRE OF THE PHOENIX.

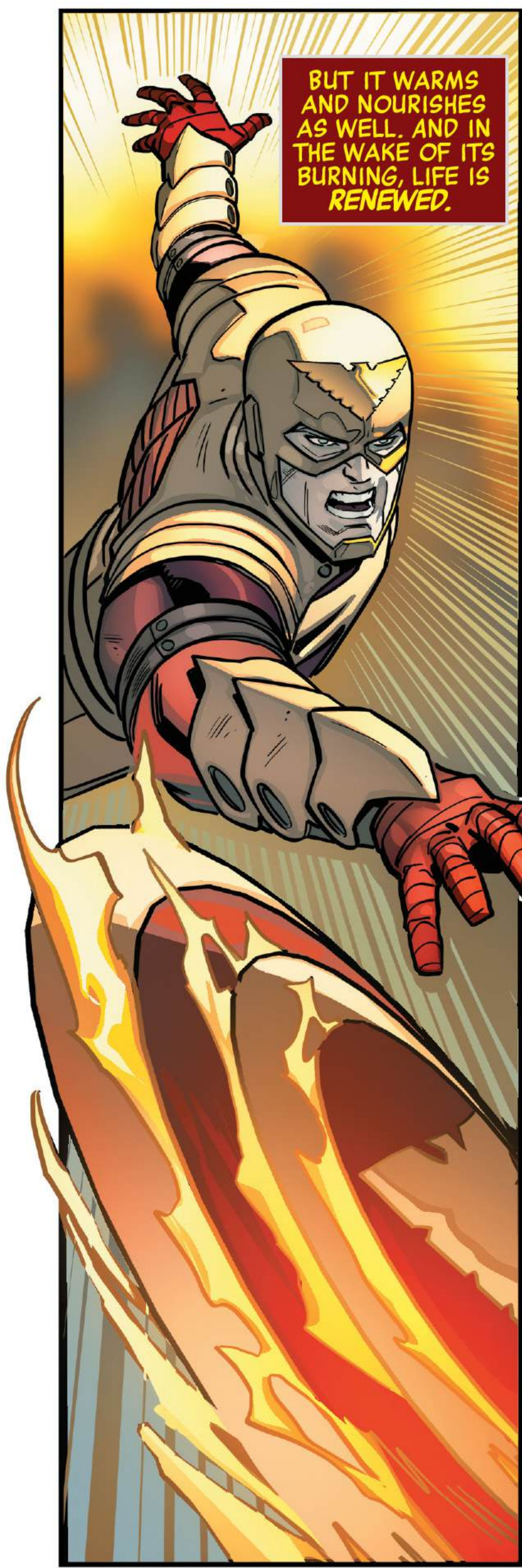


TO WIELD IT
AS NO ONE EVER
HAS BEFORE.

TO GIVE BIRTH
TO A NEW STYLE
OF WUSHU.

THE WAY OF
THE FIREBIRD.

COSMIC
KUNG FU.



BUT IT WARMS
AND NOURISHES
AS WELL. AND IN
THE WAKE OF ITS
BURNING, LIFE IS
RENEWED.

A full-page comic book illustration of Shang-Chi. He is a young man with black hair, wearing a white tank top and grey pants, with white bandages on his forearms and legs. He is holding a long wooden staff horizontally across his chest with both hands. He is surrounded by intense orange and yellow flames and fire. In the background, there are traditional Chinese buildings, some of which are on fire. At the bottom of the page, a large, swirling fire vortex is visible, with a small figure of Shang-Chi falling into it. Another small figure is visible in the bottom left corner, running away from the viewer. The overall color palette is dominated by reds, oranges, and yellows, creating a sense of intense heat and action.

MY NAME IS SHANG-CHI.

MASTER OF KUNG FU.

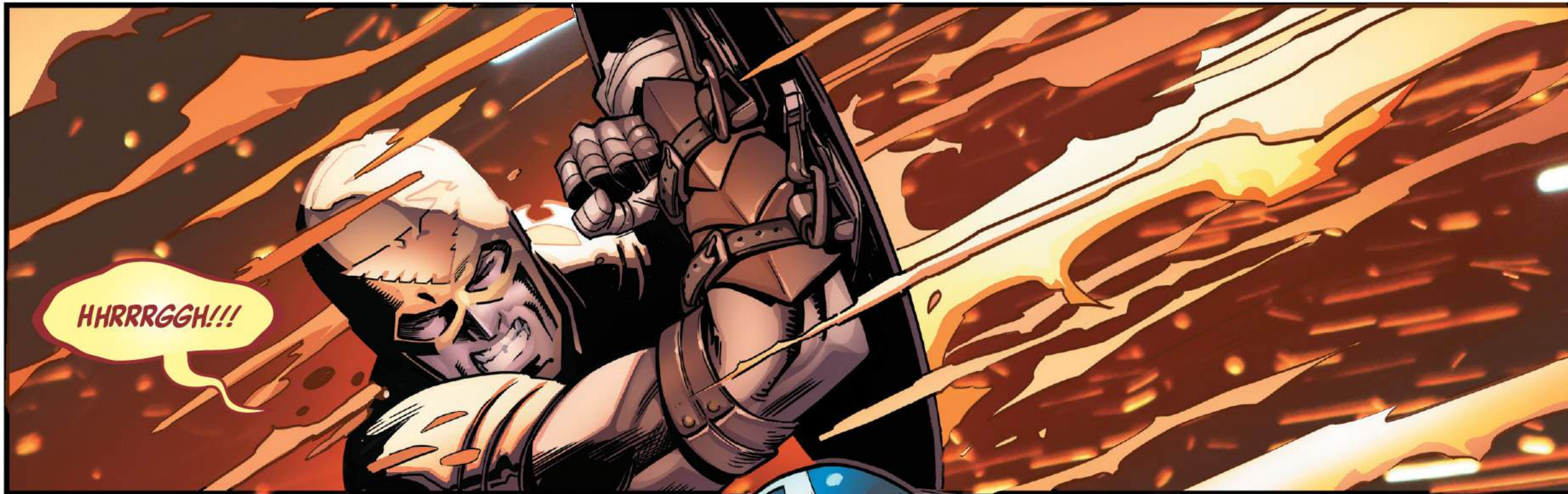
AND THESE ARE THE DEADLY HANDS OF THE PHOENIX.

I WILL PUNCH WITH ALL THE FIRE IN MY SOUL.

BUT I WILL WALK INSTEAD OF FLY.

I WILL GUARD MY MIND LIKE THE FORBIDDEN CITY.

AND I WILL **NEVER** TAKE ANOTHER LIFE, NO MATTER WHAT THE--



HRRRGH!!!



DAMN IT,
NO! I WAS
LOSING!

IT WAS A
GOOD PLAN,
CAP. BUT I DON'T
THINK THE PHOENIX
LIKES IT WHEN ITS
PLAYTHINGS TRY
TO MAKE
PLANS.

SHANG-CHI'S
FATHER WAS ONE
OF THE FOULEST
VILLAINS WHO EVER
LIVED. I HAD HOPED THERE
WAS ENOUGH DARKNESS
IN THE SON'S SOUL
FOR THE PHOENIX'S
LIKING.

BUT I WOULD
IMAGINE THAT
SHANG'S DEEP-SEATED
REFUSAL TO FOLLOW IN
HIS FATHER'S MURDEROUS
FOOTSTEPS PROVED
HIS UNDOING.

YEAH,
SPEAKING OF
KILLERS...



NAMOR
WON HIS BOUT.
DON'T KNOW
ABOUT THE REST
OF YOU, BUT I
COULD HEAR *ECHO*
SCREAMING IN
MY HEAD.

I WANNA
KNOW WHAT
THAT SLIMY
FISH KISSER
DID TO
HER.



EXACT SAME THING HE'LL TRY TO DO TO WHICHEVER ONE OF US HE FACES NEXT.

I'VE WRESTLED **PREHISTORIC FISH** BEFORE. USUALLY ENDS WITH **ZABU** GNAWING ON THEIR BONES.

GRRRR.

WE AIN'T ALL FISH, LADY.

WE CAN'T KEEP PLAYING THIS **GAME!** PEOPLE ARE GOING TO **DIE!**

I ASSURE YOU, IT'S NO GAME, STEVEN.

IT IS TO THE BIG **DANDIFIED BUZZARD** WHO'S LORDING OVER US. WE'VE GOTTA FIGURE A WAY OUT OF THIS PLACE, T'CHALLA, AND TAKE THE FIGHT TO THE PHOENIX.

LIKE IT OR NOT, OUR FIGHT IS **HERE**. I BATTLED **NIGHTHAWK** FOR HOURS, TO A VIRTUAL STANDSTILL. UNTIL THE PHOENIX SIMPLY **CHOSE** ME OVER HIM.

WE ARE ALL WRESTLING WITH THE SAME **FEARS** RIGHT NOW. OF FAILING. AND, EVEN MORE SO, OF WHAT HAPPENS IF WE **WIN**.



I DON'T HAVE THAT FEAR.

AND WHAT IF WE **DO** WIN? THEN IT'S AVENGERS VS. THE PHOENIX ALL OVER AGAIN? EXCEPT THIS TIME, IT'S ONE OF **US** WHO'S WEARING THE FLAMES.



I AIN'T NO AVENGER NO MORE.

AND **NONE** 'A Y'ALL ARE GONNA BE WEARING FLAMES.

NOT FOR **LONG**, AT LEAST.

YOU PEOPLE HAVE **TAKEN** ENOUGH FROM MUTANTS. YOU AIN'T GETTING THE **PHOENIX** TOO.

THIS RIGHT HERE IS EXACTLY WHAT THE PHOENIX **WANTS**.

US POSTURING, BICKERING WITH ONE ANOTHER, DIVIDED.



YEAH, SAYS YOU. AIN'T YOU THE LADY WHO STOLE **THOR'S** HAMMER AND NAME?

ONE OF US IS GOING TO DIE HERE, T'CHALLA. UNLESS WE CAN END THIS AND SEND THAT SPACE BIRD BACK WHERE IT BELONGS.

AND WHAT IF THE **EARTH** IS WHERE IT BELONGS, STEVEN? WHAT IF IT HAS COME TO US NOW FOR A VERY SPECIFIC REASON?

EITHER WAY, WE MUST BE READY. BOTH HERE, WITHIN THE PHOENIX FORCE...



"...AND WITHOUT."

AVENGERS MOUNTAIN. THE BRAIN ROOM.

OKAY, I'VE
GOT YOUR CELESTIAL
TELEPORTER PRIMED AND
LOCKED ONTO THE
PHOENIX'S RADIATION
SIGNATURE.

IF WE SEND IT
TO YOUR AVENGERS
MOUNTAIN *JAIL*, ARE
YOU SURE IT'LL
HOLD?

IT'S A
CELESTIAL'S
RIB CAGE,
MOON GIRL.
IT'LL
HOLD.

THIS IS
BLADE. THOR SAYS
TO ONLY DO THAT AS
A LAST RESORT. IF
THE BIRD TRIES TO
FLY THE COOP.

AT LEAST
UNTIL WE GET
THE OTHER
AVENGERS
BACK.

OUR KING
WILL SEND THEM
BACK TO YOU! OR
AT LEAST THEIR
ASHES!

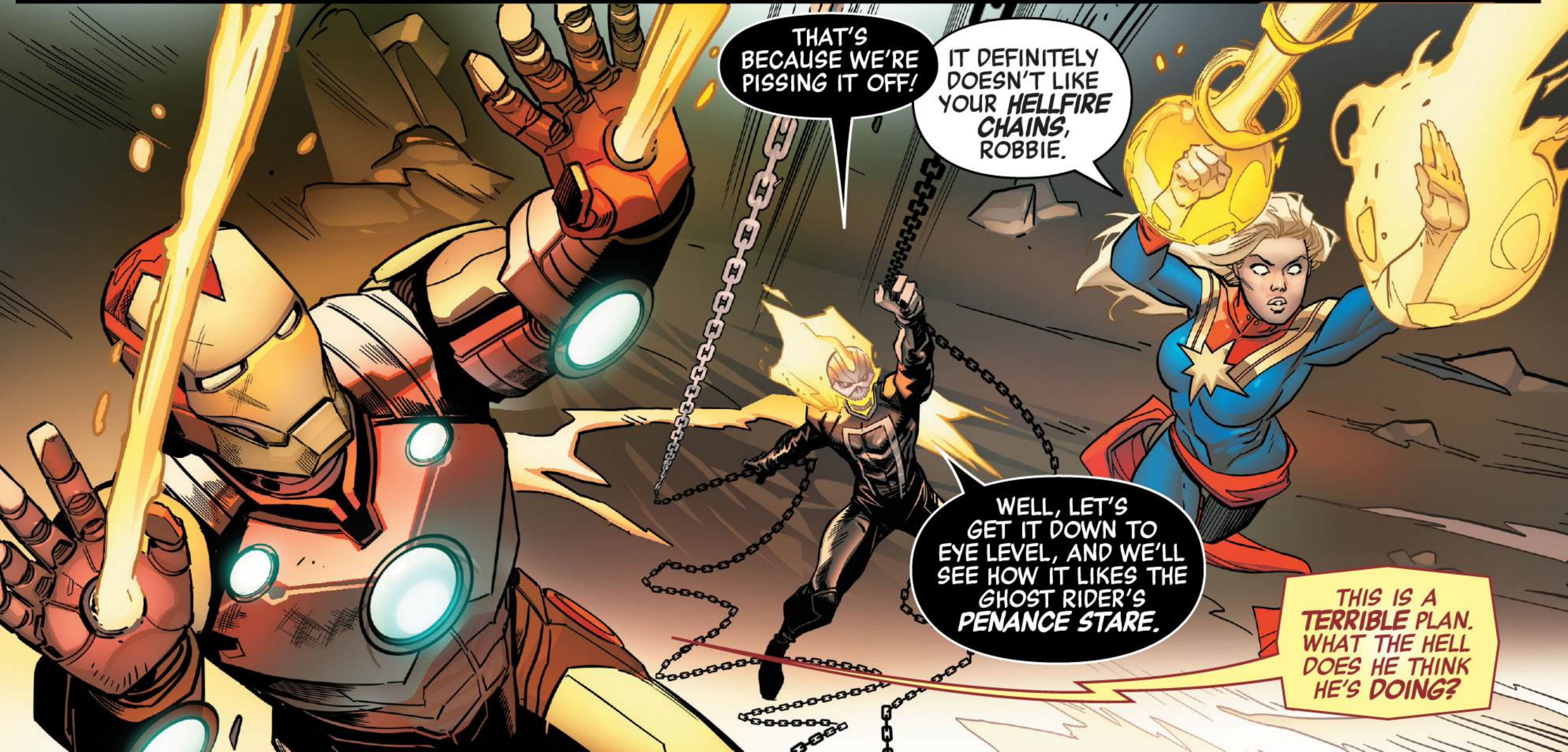
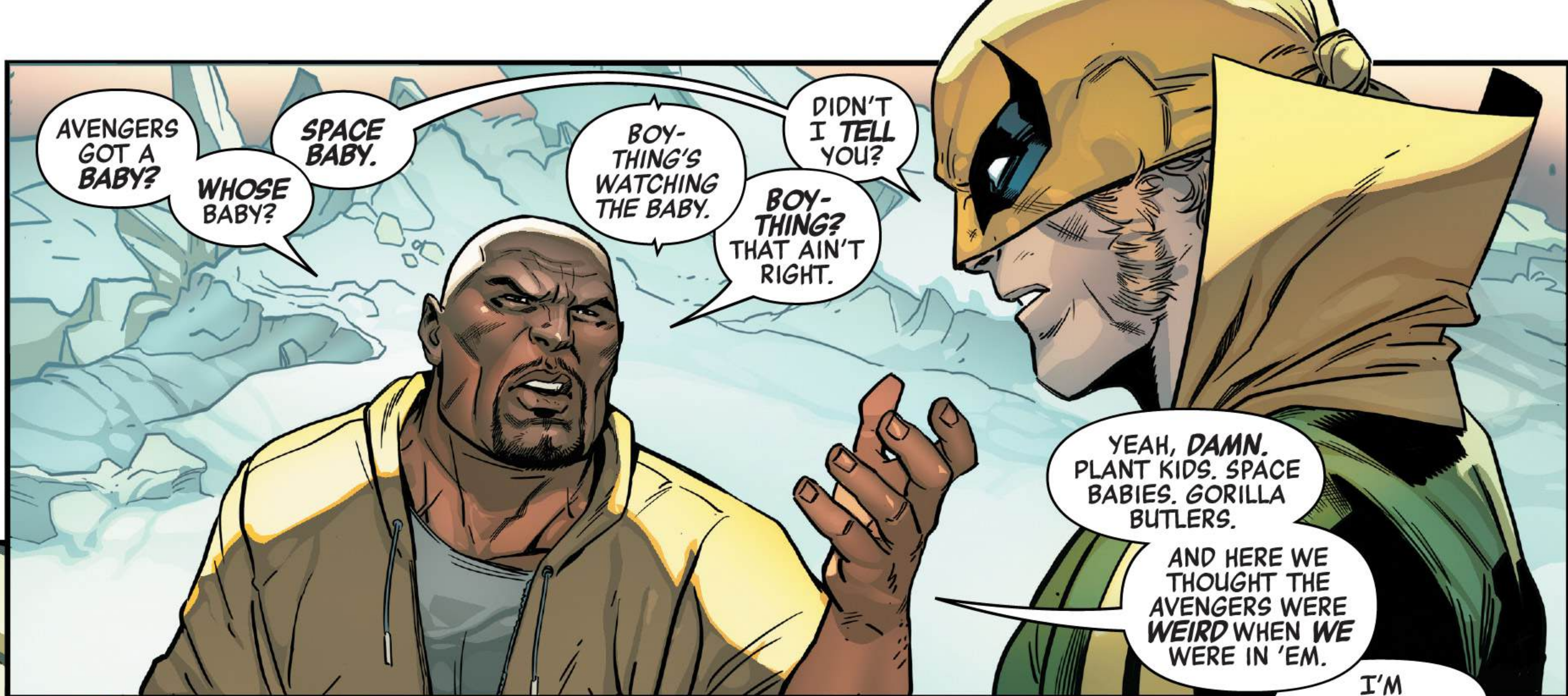
YES, AND
THIS GOD CARRIES
A RATHER LARGE
HAMMER.

THAT PLACE
THE PHOENIX
SENT US...MAN, I'M
TELLING YOU,
DANNY...

...IT WAS
THE *WHITEST*
PLACE I'VE EVER
SEEN. AND I'VE
BEEN TO THE
HAMPTONS.

KEEP YOUR
PEOPLE BACK,
SHAMU. *GOD'S*
ORDERS.

GORILLA-MAN,
IF YOU'RE IN THE
CONTROL ROOM,
WHO'S WATCHING
THE *BABY?*





WE'VE BEEN DOWN THIS ROAD BEFORE. TAKING ON THE PHOENIX FORCE DIRECTLY... THAT'S NOT A FIGHT THE AVENGERS CAN WIN. NOT IF WE WANNA SAVE OUR FRIENDS.

YOU ASK ME, FOR HIM, THIS IS ABOUT MORE THAN JUST THE AVENGERS. FOR THOR...



"...THIS IS PERSONAL."

I KNOW THIS FLAME WELL. I KNOW IT CANNOT BE REASONED WITH. IT HAS NOT THE FACULTIES.

IT IS ALL BOILING EMOTION AND UNBRIDLED EGO (AYE, THIS IS COMING FROM ME). IT DOES NOT CARE WHO IT HURTS OR RUINS TO ACHIEVE ITS OWN WARPED DESIRES.

IT IS *NARCISSISM* AT ITS FIERY, COSMIC FINEST.



I Am THOR ODINSON.

THUNDER FATHER OF ASGARD.

AND I DESPISE THE PHOENIX.

EVEN IF I CANNOT REMEMBER... EXACTLY *WHY*.

STONEHENGE.

THE **EBONY BLADE** WAS FORGED OF FALLEN STARSTONE THAT CAME HURLING FROM THE DEPTHS OF THE HEAVENS!

THE SAME HEAVENS WHERE THE PHOENIX TURNS WORLDS TO SHATTERED EMBERS!

NOW BEHOLD THE TWO GREAT FORCES UNITED--

--IN THE HANDS OF THE **PHOENIX KNIGHT**!



YOU CARRY A **SWORD**, BUT YOU TALK MORE THAN YOU **STAB**. I WILL TEACH YOU THE SPIRIT OF THE BLADE, PRETENDER...

...WHEN I BURY **MINE** IN YOUR INNARDS!

ALL THESE PEOPLE OUT HERE ACTING LIKE THEY DON'T WANNA BE THE PHOENIX.

EVEN AS THEY'RE TRYING TO **KILL** EACH OTHER FOR IT.

THE SKIES ABOVE
THE BERMUDA
TRIANGLE.

AIN'T NOBODY
DON'T WANNA FLY.

HELL, WHY YOU THINK
I'M ALWAYS HAVING
COLOSSUS THROW
ME AROUND?

RRRRRR.



AND AIN'T NOBODY IN
OUR LINE 'A WORK
DON'T APPRECIATE THE
POWER TO COME BACK
FROM THE DEAD.

TODAY'S
A GOOD DAY
TO DIE!

MAYBE IT'S A
POWER WE WORRY
ABOUT CONTROLLING.
LIKE A DRUNK IN A
WAREHOUSE OF
ENDLESS BOOZE.



BUT WE ALL
CONVINCE
OURSELVES
WE COULD.

FOR ONE
MORE DRINK,
AT LEAST.



I SEE THOSE DESIRES FLICKERING IN THESE FOLKS' EYES. EVEN THE ONES WHO DON'T WANNA ADMIT IT.

BECAUSE I CAN SEE 'EM IN MYSELF TOO.

I RECKON I'M USED TO BEING REPULSED BY MY OWN THOUGHTS. HAD A LOTTA YEARS OF LEARNING THE HARD WAY TO ALWAYS EXPECT MYSELF TO BE A REAL *GRADE-A* PIECE 'A \$%€#.

SORRY, JANE.



HULKS DON'T LIKE TO LOSE!

BUT A PIECE OF \$%€# CAN STILL MANAGE TO DO THE *RIGHT* THING NOW AND THEN.

ESPECIALLY WHEN IT INVOLVES DOIN' A WHOLE LOTTA *WRONG*.

EASTER ISLAND.

UKRAINE.
THE CHERNOBYL EXCLUSION ZONE.
THE RED FOREST.

THE PHOENIX MAY BE THE SWEETEST FRUIT THAT EVER PLOPPED DOWN OUTTA THE STARS. BUT THE JUICE STILL AIN'T WORTH THE SQUEEZE.

THIS FRUIT COMES WITH A DEADLY *PRICE*. AND TOO MANY TIMES I'VE WATCHED OTHERS PAY IT.

JEANNIE GOING DARK, RACHEL'S FAMILY GETTING MASSACRED BEFORE HER EYES, HOPE SACRIFICING HER OWN CHILDHOOD TO TRY TO BE A MESSIAH.

I'M DONE LETTING GOOD PEOPLE STEP IN FRONT OF ME TO TAKE BIG FLAMING BULLETS. TAKING BULLETS IS SUPPOSED TO BE *MY* JOB.

A full-page comic book illustration of Wolverine in his Weapon X persona, also known as the Phoenix. He is depicted in a dynamic, lunging pose, wearing his signature brown and black suit with a red sash. His mask is partially torn, revealing his feral face and sharp teeth. He has his adamantium claws extended from both hands. The background is a chaotic scene of fire and destruction, with large, jagged orange and yellow flames consuming the landscape. In the lower-left corner, there is a large, dark, rectangular object, possibly a piece of machinery or a vehicle, with a yellow triangular radiation warning symbol on its side. In the lower-right corner, there is a smaller, similar object, also with a radiation symbol. The overall color palette is dominated by the warm tones of fire (red, orange, yellow) and the cool tones of Wolverine's suit (brown, black).

NAME'S
LOGAN.

WEAPON X.
THE WOLVERINE.

AND NOW I'M
THE DAMN
PHOENIX.

YEAH, BELIEVE ME,
BUB, I'M JUST AS
DAMN **SCARED** AS
YOU ARE.

IS IT HER HISTORY
WITH MY FATHER
THAT IRKS ME SO?

NO.

MOST EVERYTHING
IN EXISTENCE HAS
AN UNEASY HISTORY
WITH MY FATHER.

THERE'S
SOMETHING
ELSE.

SOME CONNECTION
OF MY OWN WITH THE
PHOENIX FORCE.

SOMETHING
I'VE FELT TIME
AND AGAIN...

...BUT COULD NEVER
QUITE PUT MY
MIGHTY FINGER ON.

GODS HELP ME,
IT FEELS
ALMOST LIKE...

ENOUGH
OF THIS!

...LIKE SOME
FORM OF LOVE.

I HAVE NO
WISH TO FIGHT
HERE TODAY, GOD
OF THUNDER! YOU,
LEAST OF ALL!

IT'S
TIME YOU
KNEW THE TRUTH
OF YOUR OWN
EXISTENCE.

THE SECRET
YOUR FATHER
ODIN HAS HIDDEN
FROM YOU FOR
CENTURIES.

I'VE COME
TO TELL YOU
EVERYTHING.

MY
SON.



ALEX ROSS
42 TIMELESS SKETCH VARIANT



ALEX ROSS
42 TIMELESS VARIANT



ALEX ROSS
43 TIMELESS SKETCH VARIANT



ALEX ROSS
43 TIMELESS VARIANT

43 ENTER THE PHOENIX PART 4
"IN THE BEGINNING...THERE WAS NOT DARKNESS"



CHERNOBYL.

IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN SAID...THAT IN THE BEGINNING...THERE WAS DARKNESS.

BUT THAT IS A LIE.

A LIE TOLD BY THE SIMPLEMINDED BEASTS...

...WHO STUMBLED OUT OF THAT DARKNESS.

THE GODS AND MEN.

SO ARROGANT THEY BELIEVED NOTHING OF NOTE COULD'VE EXISTED BEFORE THEM.

BUT THE TRUTH IS, IN THE BEGINNING...

...BEFORE ALL THAT WOULD EVER BE HAD HATCHED...

...THERE WASN'T DARKNESS AT ALL.

THERE WAS FIRE.

OUR FIRE.

BEFORE THERE WERE WORLDS OR STARS OR THE BLACK RIVERS OF SPACE RUSHING BETWEEN THEM...

...THERE WAS THE PHOENIX.

AND WE LOOKED UPON AN INFINITY OF OUR BEAUTIFUL FLAME...

...AND WANTED FOR NOTHING.

UNTIL THE TIME CAME...

...THAT WE HUNGRED.



ADAMANTIUM.

CUTS
THROUGH
BONES LIKE
THEY'RE BUTTER.
CAN'T BE
BROKEN.

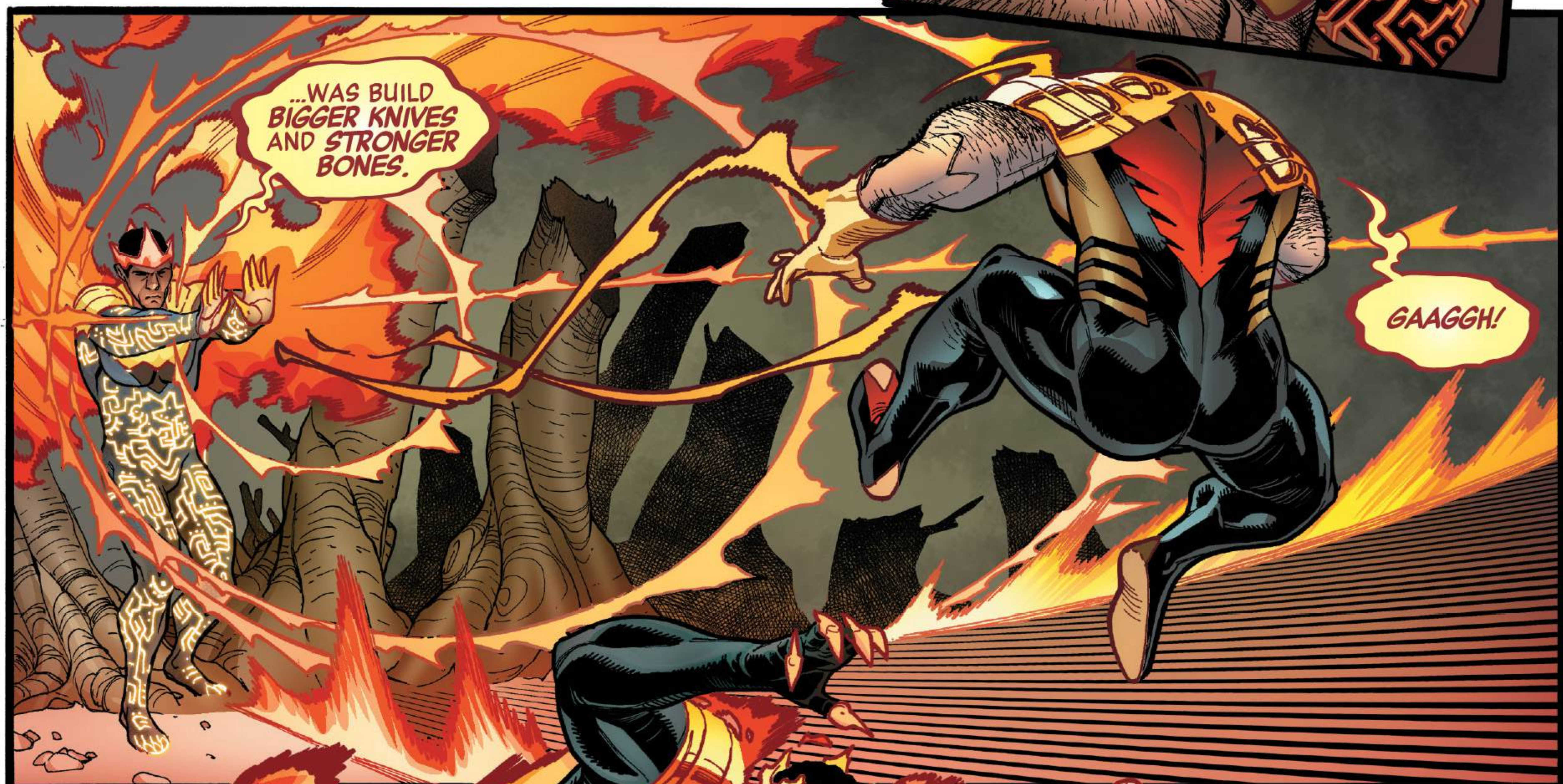
AND IT'S
PRETTY MUCH
ALL I'M MADE OF.
OTHER THAN
BACON AND
BEER.

YOU CAN'T
BEAT ME,
T'CHALLA. TELL
THE PHOENIX YOU
WANNA TAKE
THE L.



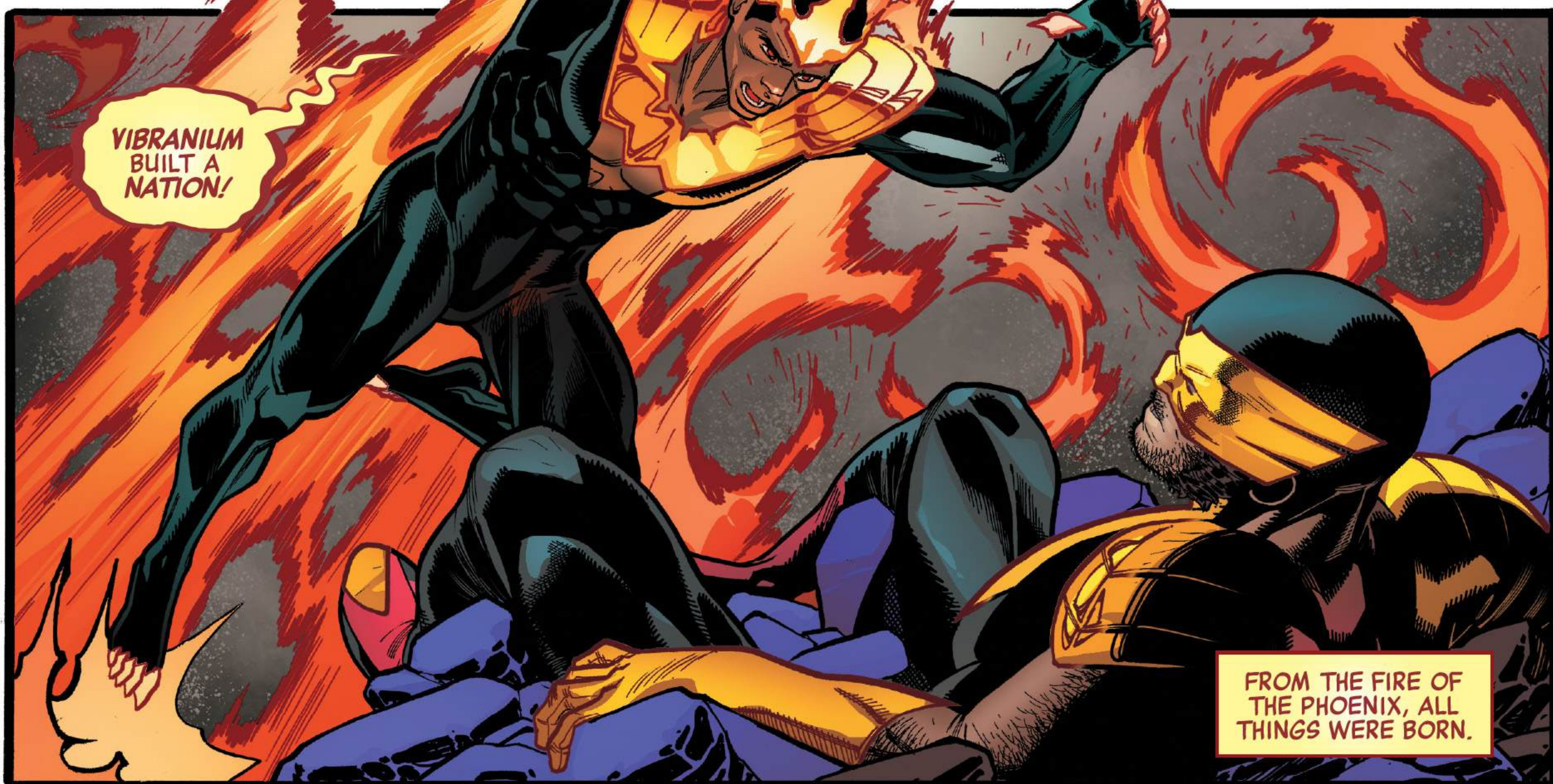
A FINE ALLOY,
ADAMANTIUM.

YET ALL
SOMEONE
COULD THINK
TO DO WITH
IT...



...WAS BUILD
BIGGER KNIVES
AND **STRONGER**
BONES.

GAAGGH!



VIBRANIUM
BUILT A
NATION!

FROM THE FIRE OF
THE PHOENIX, ALL
THINGS WERE BORN.



AND IT'S STRONG ENOUGH TO DO WHAT NO MAN OR MUTANT ALONE COULD ACCOMPLISH.

IF IT COMES TO IT, THE VIBRANIUM TECHNOLOGY OF WAKANDA CAN **ABSORB** THE PHOENIX. AND SAVE THE--

BECAUSE THE PHOENIX HUNGERED, AN ORCHARD WAS GROWN--WITH **PLANETS** AS THE RIPENING FRUIT.



HRRGGH...

THE PHOENIX IS... SENDING MORE POWER.

TRYING TO **OVERLOAD** MY--

IT TOOK US A FEW BILLION YEARS TO EVEN **NOTICE**...

...THAT SOME OF THOSE FRUITS HAD BECOME INFESTED WITH **PARASITES**.



RRRRRGH! ANCESTORS, HELP ME! THE VIBRANIUM... WILL HOLD!

THE **BLACK PANTHER** WILL HOLD!



YOU--AND ALL YOUR KIND-- YOU ARE **WORMS** TO US.

NICE PLAN, BUB. LET ME SHOW YOU HOW IT ENDS.

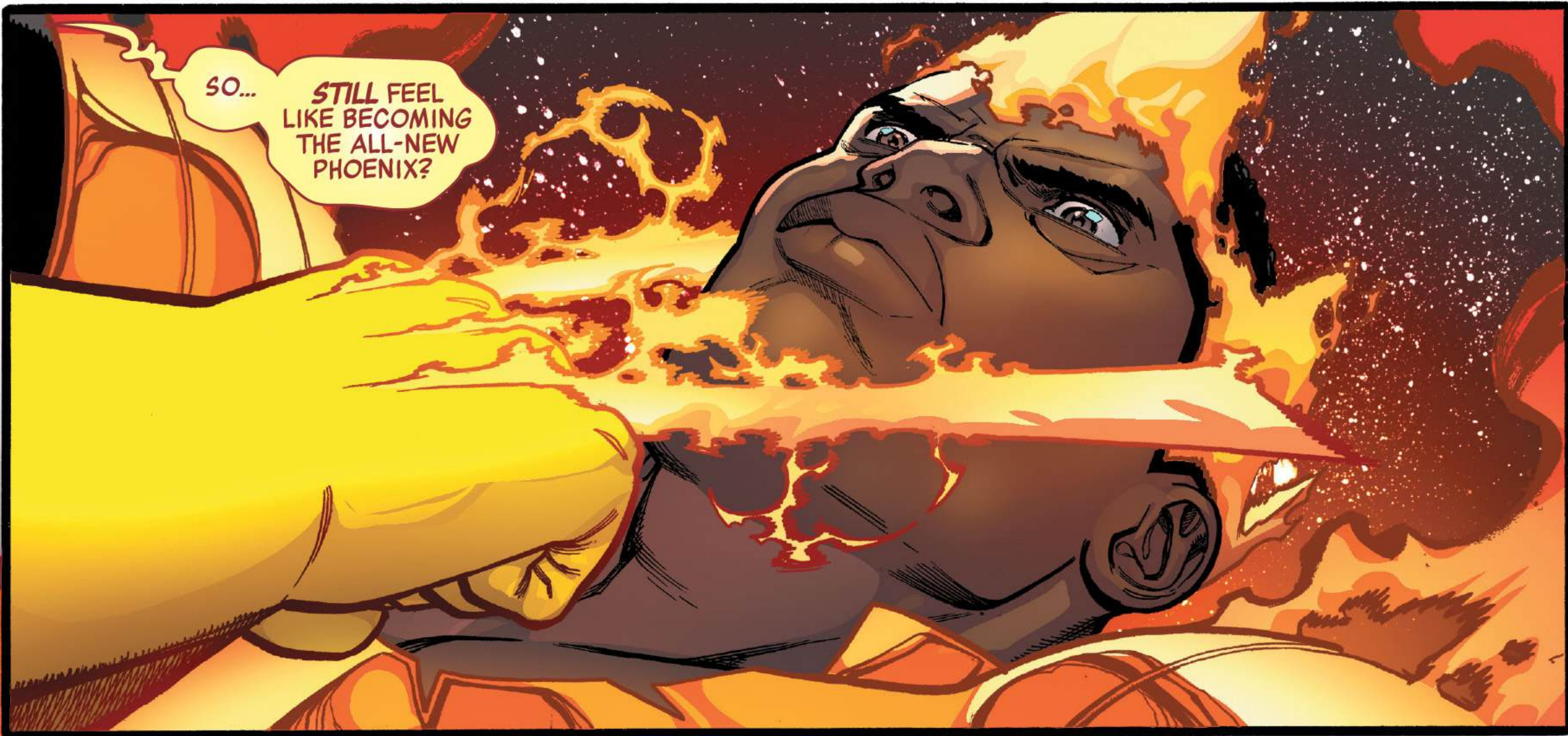


AND EVERYTHING YOU'VE EVER GAZED AT WITH WONDER AND AWE...

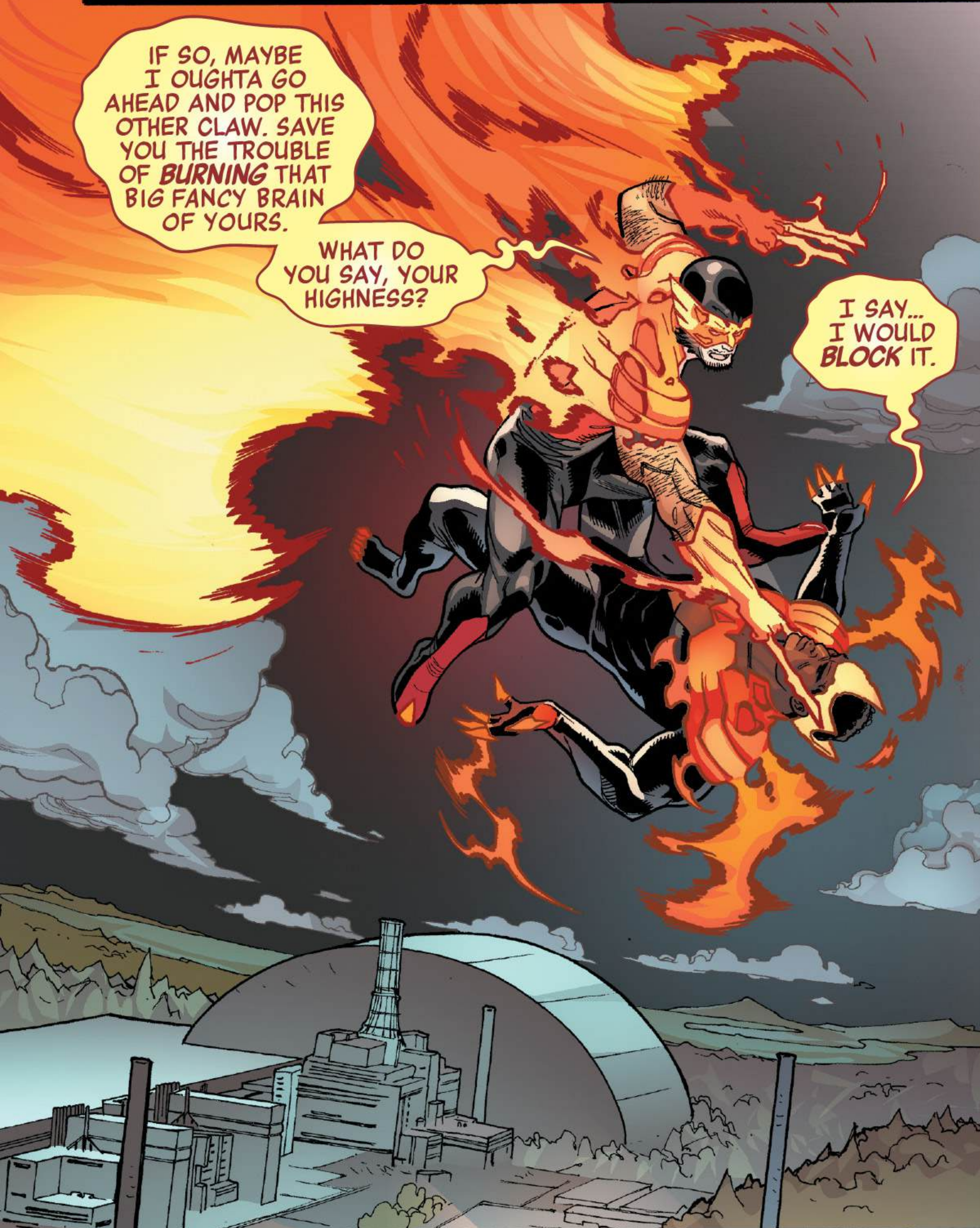
...WAS NOTHING BUT THE **ASH** FROM OUR FIRE.

SNIKT

SNIKT



SO...
STILL FEEL
LIKE BECOMING
THE ALL-NEW
PHOENIX?



IF SO, MAYBE
I OUGHTA GO
AHEAD AND POP
THIS
OTHER CLAW. SAVE
YOU THE TROUBLE
OF *BURNING* THAT
BIG FANCY BRAIN
OF YOURS.

WHAT DO
YOU SAY, YOUR
HIGHNESS?

I SAY...
I WOULD
BLOCK IT.



YOU'D
DO WHAT
NOW?

YOUR
CLAW. THE
ONE THAT
CUTS BONES
LIKE
BUTTER.

I WOULD
BLOCK IT,
WOLVERINE.

WITH MY
TEETH.



YOU
GOTTA BE
@#\$% ME.

WHEN ONE
LACES THEIR ENTIRE
BODY WITH PRECIOUS
METAL, I HAVE
FOUND...



...IT IS BEST
TO LEAVE NO
WEAK SPOTS
UNSHIELDED.

RIGHT IN
THE GOODIES. YOU
LOW-DOWN...

IF WE
SHOULD **SURVIVE**
THIS BATTLE FOR THE
PHOENIX, LOGAN
OF HOUSE X...

...I PROMISE
TO SEND A CASE OF
THE FINEST WAKANDAN
LAGER TO KRAKOA IN
APOLOGY FOR THAT MOST
DISHONORABLE
OF BLOWS.

AND ALSO
FOR ALL OF
THESE.



KNOW THAT
I ONLY RESORT TO
SUCH TACTICS BECAUSE
YOU HAVE ENTERED THIS
TRIAL WITH **MURDER**
IN YOUR HEART.

RRRGGGH!

AND THAT
IS **EXACTLY**
WHY YOU CANNOT
BE ALLOWED TO
EMERGE
VICTORIOUS.

**DEATH
AND REBIRTH.**
THE ETERNAL CYCLE
OF THE COSMIC
FIREBIRD. WE WILL
NOT BREAK THAT
CYCLE WITH MORE
DEATH.

TOGETHER,
YOU AND I, AS
GODLY MEN, AS
WOEFUL
SINNERS...

...WE MUST
PRAY FOR
REBIRTH WITH
OUR OWN
BLOOD.

COME
ON!!!

BUT
MOSTLY
WITH **YOURS**,
I'M AFRAID.



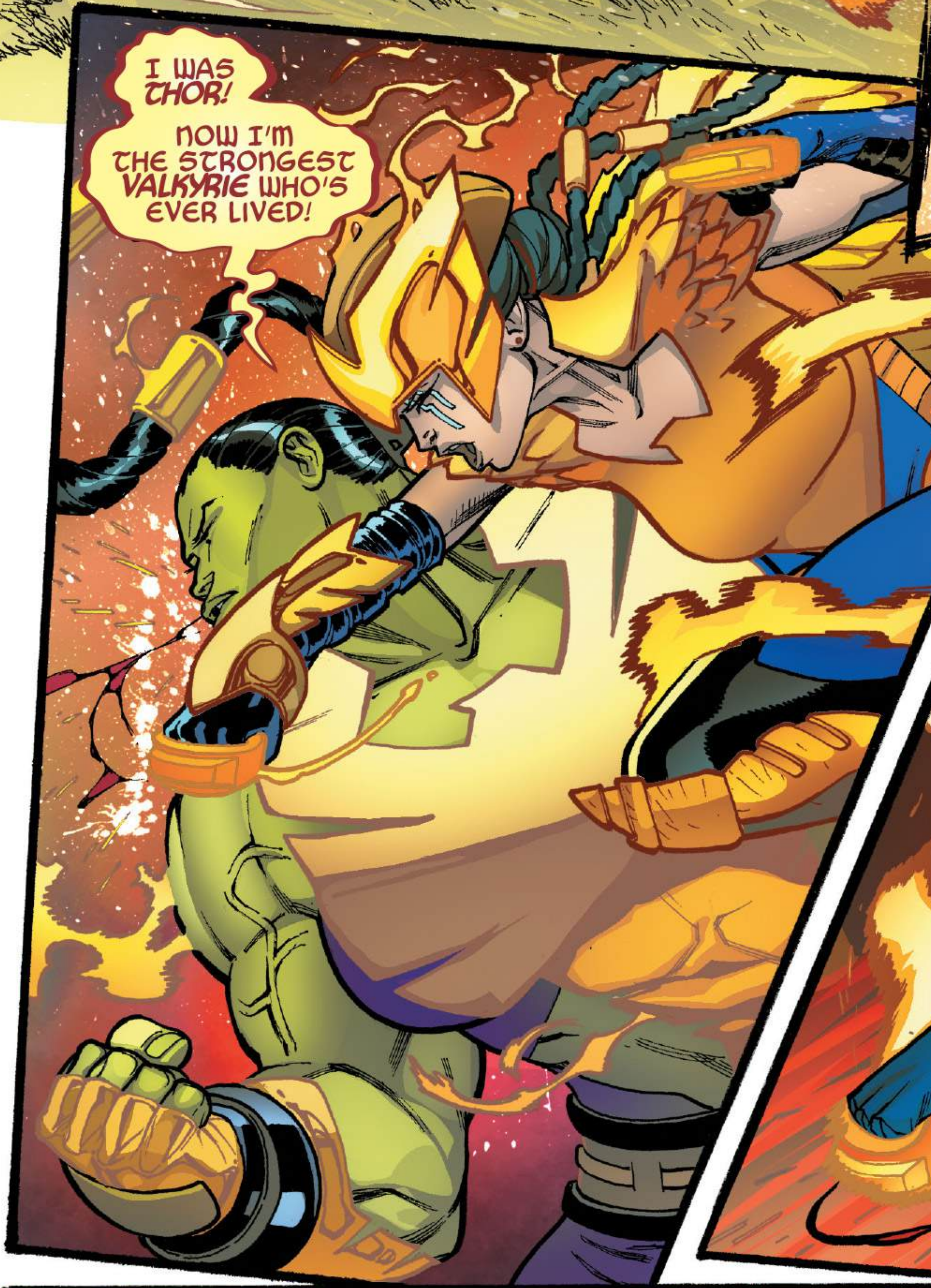


BUT NOT OUT OF CONTROL!

KNOW WHAT I'M DOING!

KNOW YOU DON'T HAVE WHAT IT TAKES!

DON'T HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?!

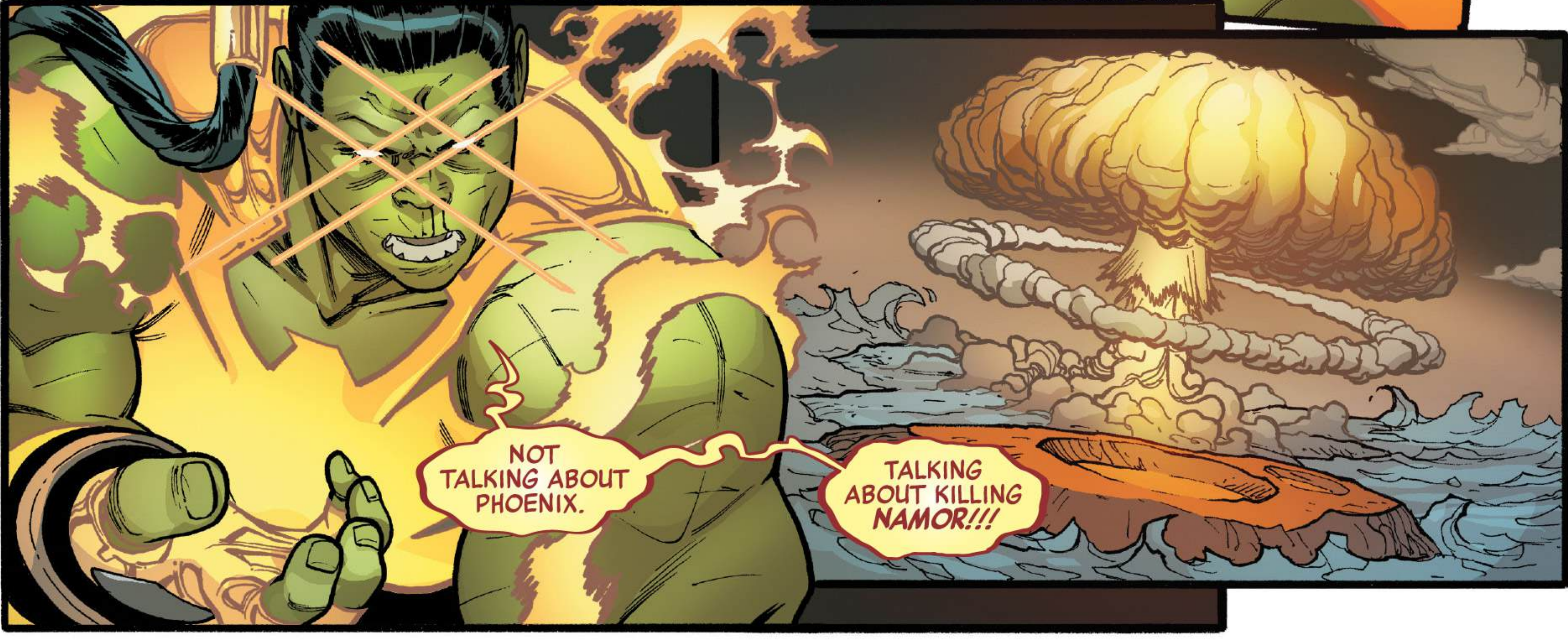


I WAS THOR!

NOW I'M THE STRONGEST VALKYRIE WHO'S EVER LIVED!



YOU THINK I CAN'T HANDLE THE PHOENIX?!



NOT TALKING ABOUT PHOENIX.

TALKING ABOUT KILLING NAMOR!!!

STONEHENGE.

GRRGGH!!!

NNNGHH!

GAAARRGGH!

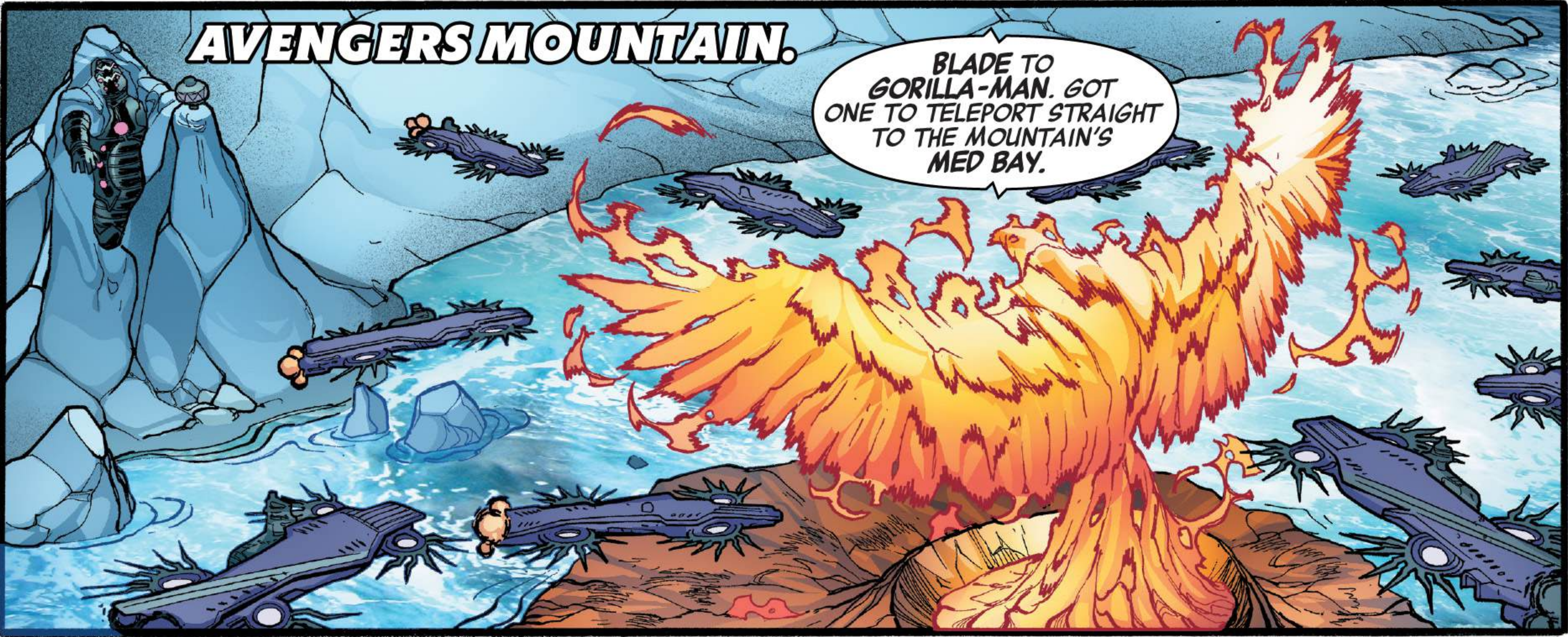
RED WIDOW,
NEVER HEARD
OF YOU 'TIL FIVE
MINUTES AGO.
ALREADY DECIDED
I REALLY DON'T
LIKE YOU.

AND THAT
YOU **DEFINITELY**
SHOULDN'T BE THE
PHOENIX.

AND YOU,
BLACK KNIGHT,
DON'T EVEN
DESERVE YOUR
OWN **SWORD.**

SWORDS
ARE FOR
KILLERS!

AND
SO IS THE
PHOENIX!



...BECAUSE WE GOT PLENTY HERE TOO!

FOR NAMOR! FOR THE PHOENIX KING!

THEY ARE SUCH SIMPLE, PREDICTABLE CREATURES.

THESE WRETCHED DROPPINGS OF A DISEASED CELESTIAL.

WHY DO WE COVET THEM SO?

HER FAULT, NO DOUBT.

THE ONE WHO COMMITTED THE GREATEST SIN OF ALL.

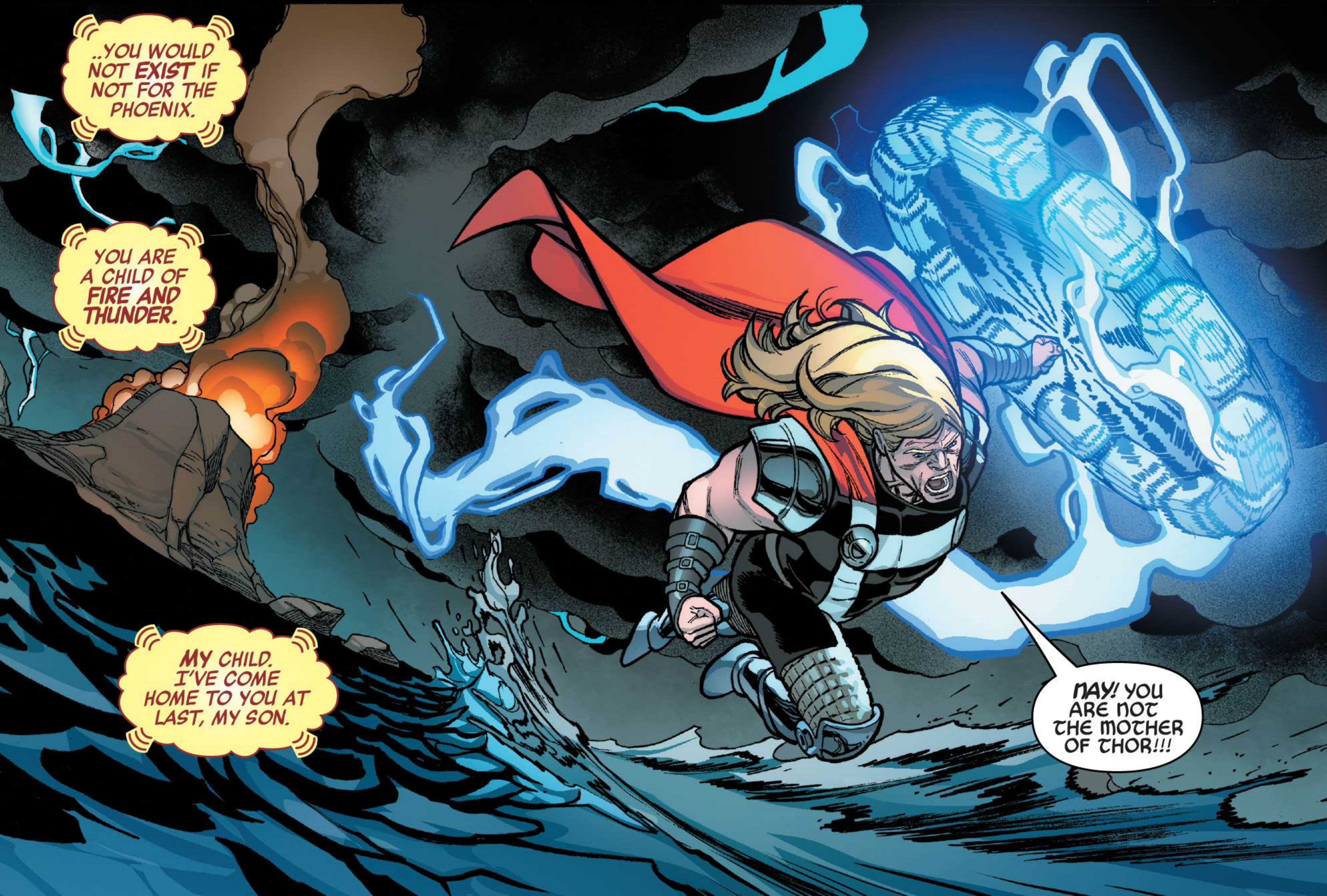
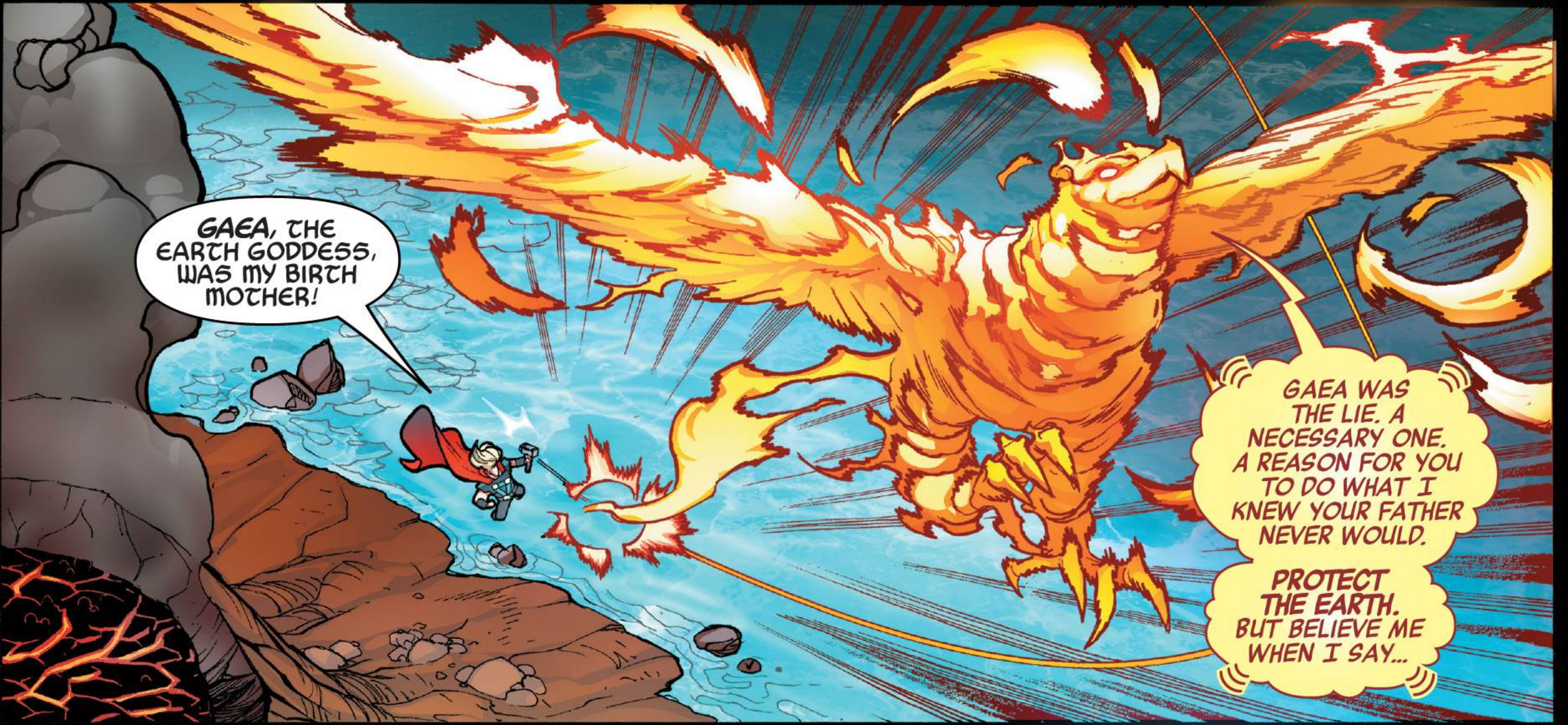
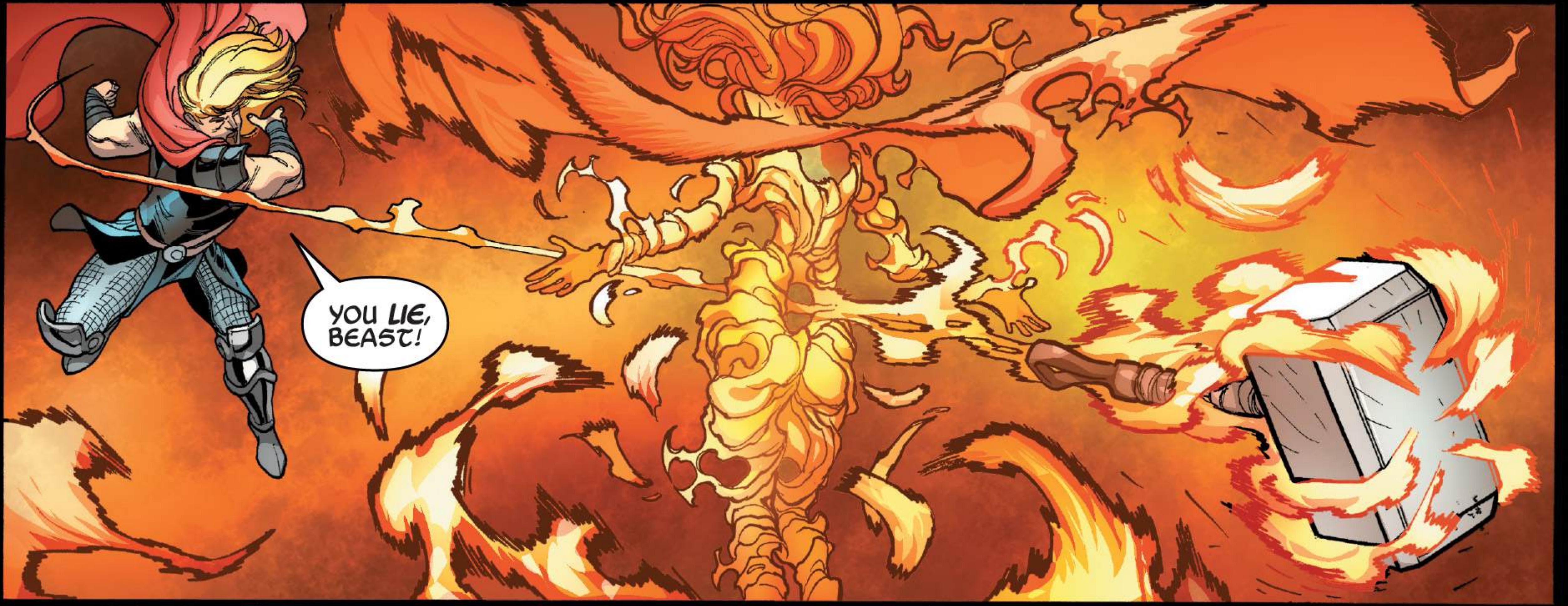
WHAT DID YOU JUST CALL ME?

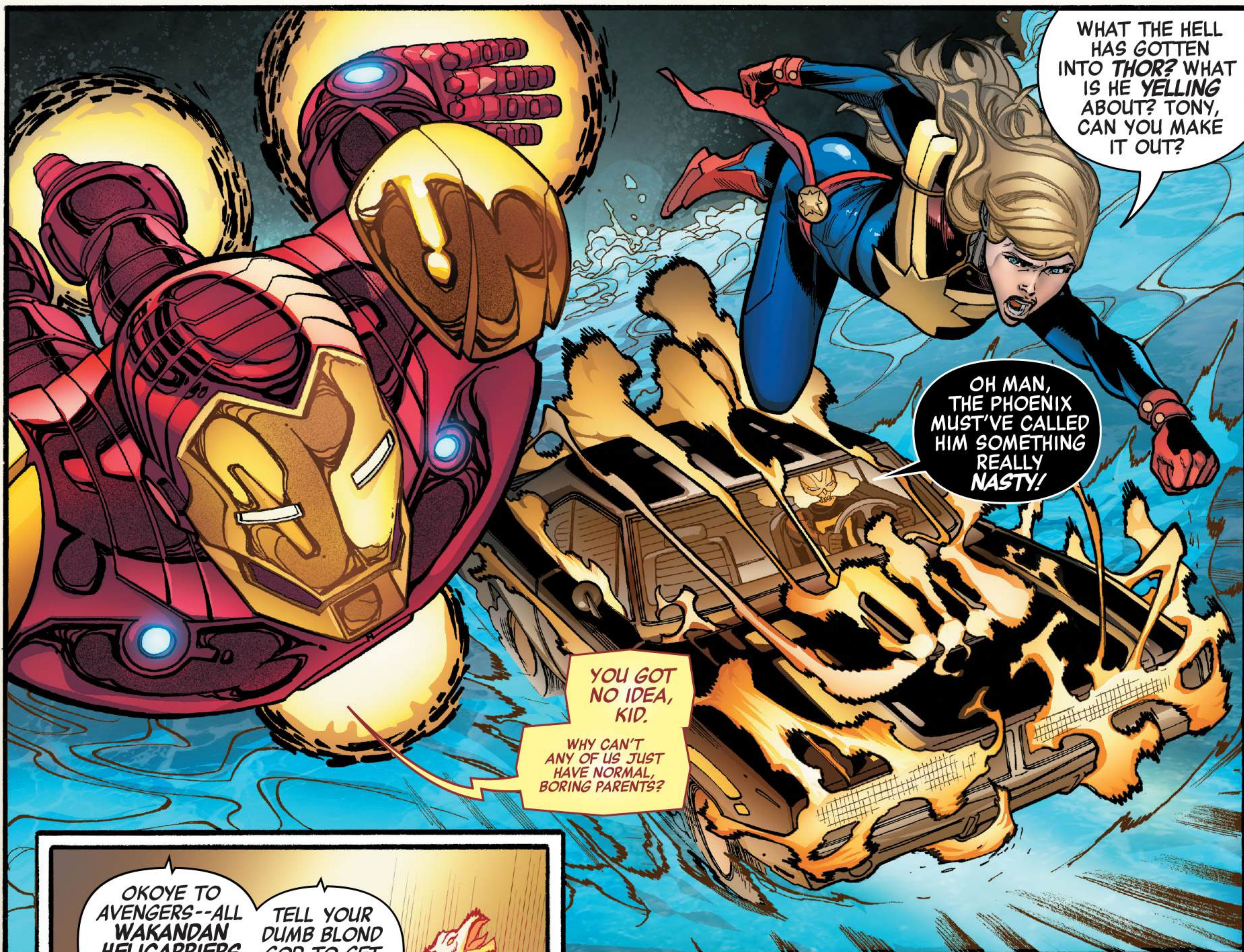
I CALLED YOU WHAT YOU ARE. IT'S NOT JUST THE BLOOD OF THE GODS THAT FLOWS THROUGH YOUR VEINS.

BY GIVING US A REASON TO CARE.

IT'S MINE AS WELL. FOR I AM YOUR TRUE MOTHER.
MY BELOVED THOR.
PHOENIX-SON.

no...





WHAT THE HELL HAS GOTTEN INTO *THOR*? WHAT IS HE *YELLING* ABOUT? TONY, CAN YOU MAKE IT OUT?

OH MAN, THE PHOENIX MUST'VE CALLED HIM SOMETHING REALLY NASTY!

YOU GOT NO IDEA, KID.

WHY CAN'T ANY OF US JUST HAVE NORMAL, BORING PARENTS?



OKOYE TO AVENGERS--ALL WAKANDAN HELICARRIERS ARE STANDING BY TO FIRE.

TELL YOUR DUMB BLOND GOD TO GET OUT OF THE WAY.

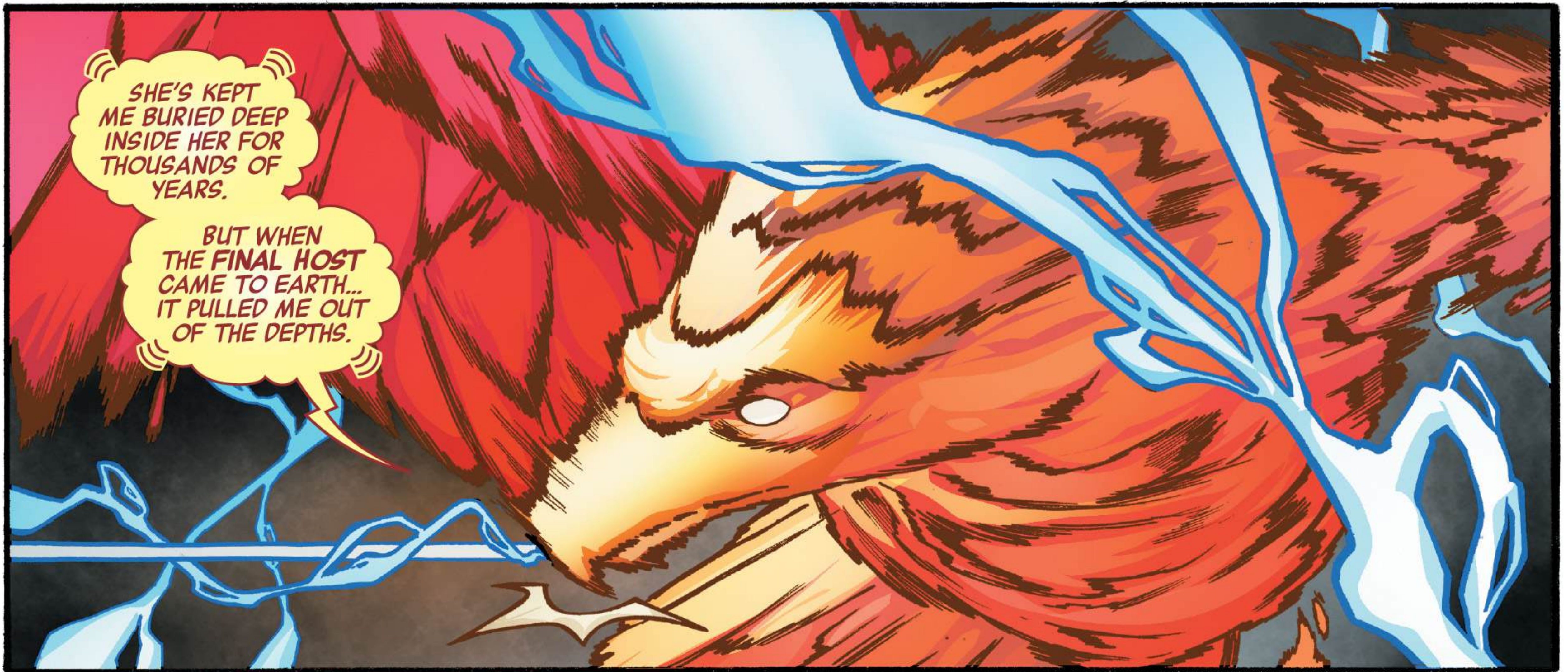
THIS IS STARK. BELAY THAT ORDER, OKOYE.



"THIS WHOLE SITUATION JUST GOT A LOT MORE PERSONAL."

THE ALL-FATHER OF ASGARD DOESN'T BELIEVE A WORD THAT COMES FROM YOUR WRETCHED *WORLD-DEVOURING* LIPS, DEVIL BIRD!

WHAT YOU BELIEVE DOESN'T CHANGE THE TRUTH. OR THE REASON THE PHOENIX IS REALLY HERE.



SHE'S KEPT
ME BURIED DEEP
INSIDE HER FOR
THOUSANDS OF
YEARS.

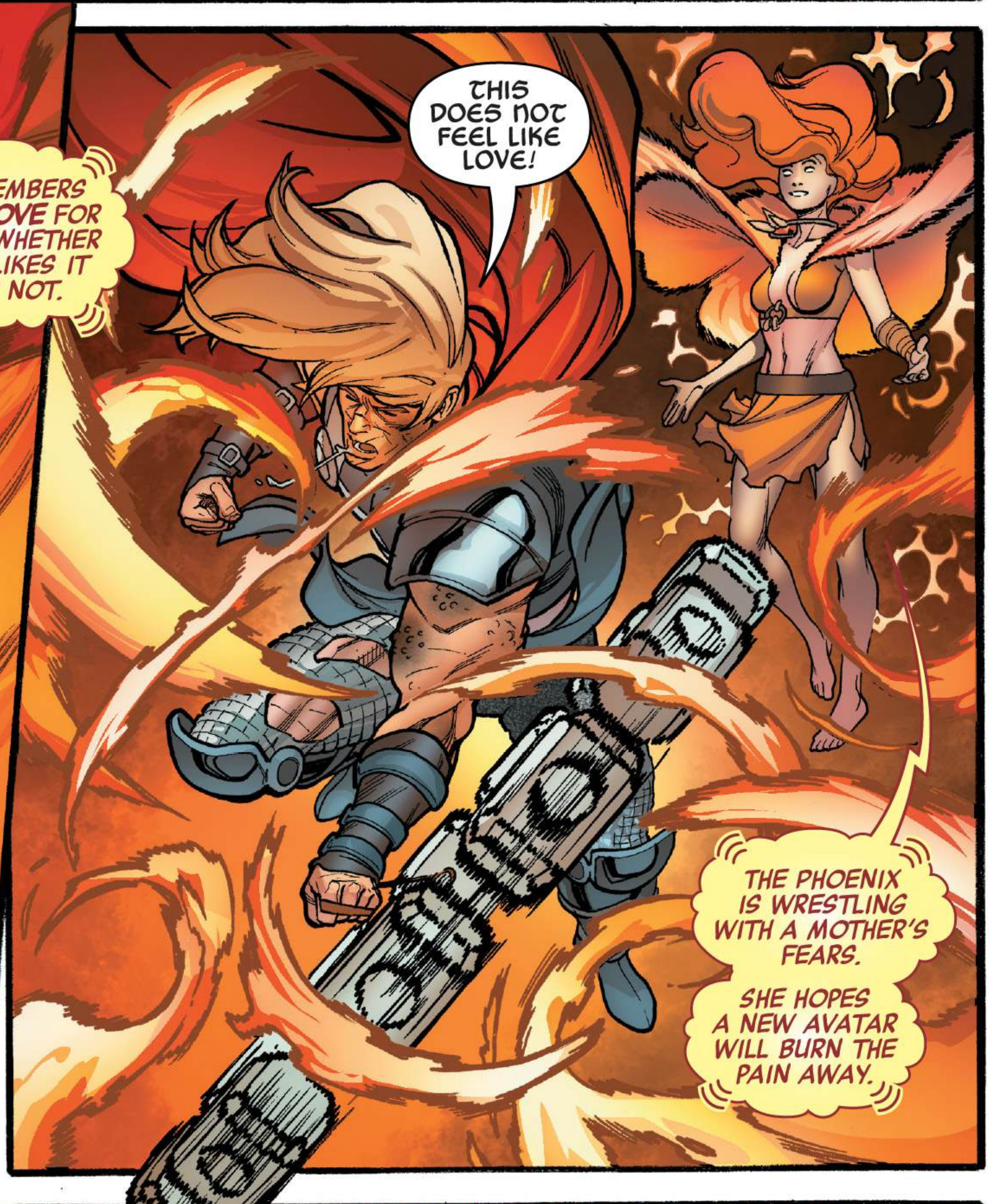
BUT WHEN
THE FINAL HOST
CAME TO EARTH...
IT PULLED ME OUT
OF THE DEPTHS.



THE PHOENIX
REMEMBERS
YOU NOW.

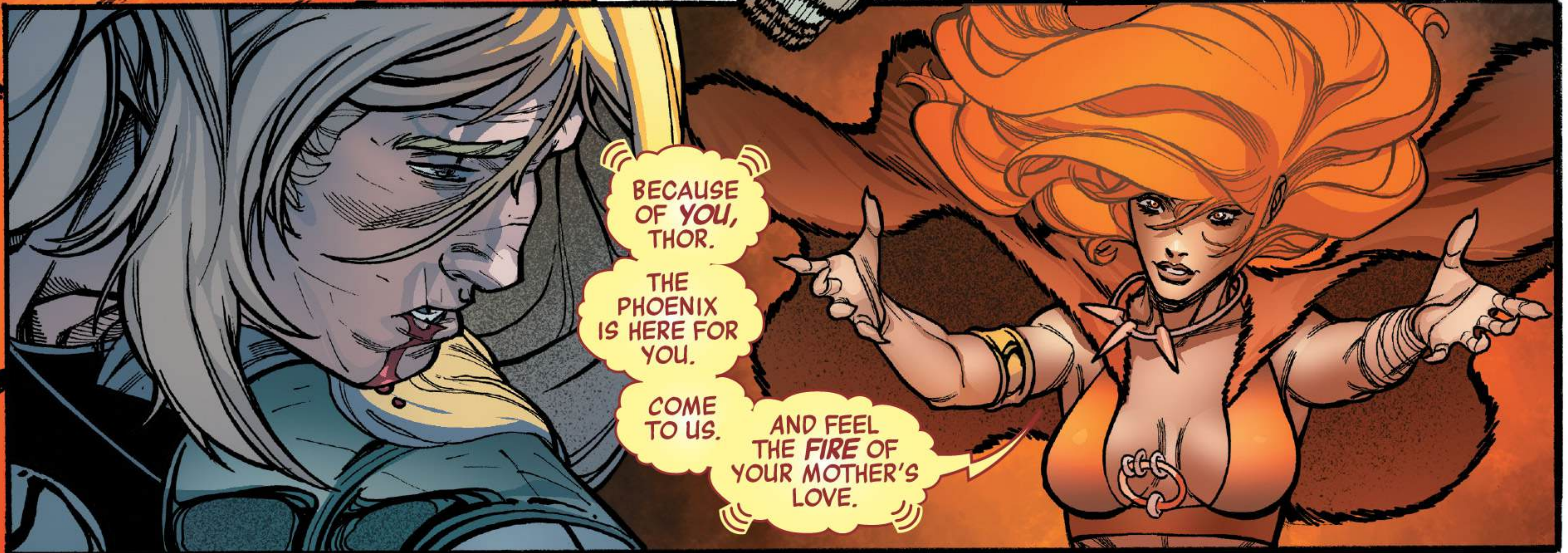
GRRRGH!!!

REMEMBERS
HER LOVE FOR
YOU. WHETHER
SHE LIKES IT
OR NOT.



THIS
DOES NOT
FEEL LIKE
LOVE!

THE PHOENIX
IS WRESTLING
WITH A MOTHER'S
FEARS.
SHE HOPES
A NEW AVATAR
WILL BURN THE
PAIN AWAY.



BECAUSE
OF YOU,
THOR.

THE
PHOENIX
IS HERE FOR
YOU.

COME
TO US.

AND FEEL
THE FIRE OF
YOUR MOTHER'S
LOVE.



DON'T WORRY--I GOT YOU, BIG GUY!



LOOKED LIKE THE PHOENIX KNOCKED YOU SILLY BACK THERE. AND I KNOW KNOCKED-SILLY. I JUST WENT NINE ROUNDS WITH THE SAVAGE JEN.

HEY, IF I'M CARRYING YOU AND YOU'RE CARRYING THE HAMMER, DOES THAT MEAN I'M STILL WORTHY?

JANE FOSTER...



UNHAND ME!

UH, THOR. THE WHOLE TIME JEN WAS SMASHING ME, SHE HAD THIS LOOK IN HER EYE THAT REALLY FREAKED ME OUT.

AND RIGHT NOW, WELL, ALL-FATHER ODINSON...

...YOU GOT THE SAME DAMN LOOK IN YOURS.



DO NOT CALL ME... THAT NAME.

IN THE BEGINNING, THERE WAS FIRE. AND ON THE EIGHTH DAY CAME THE THUNDER.

THE WHITE HOT ROOM.

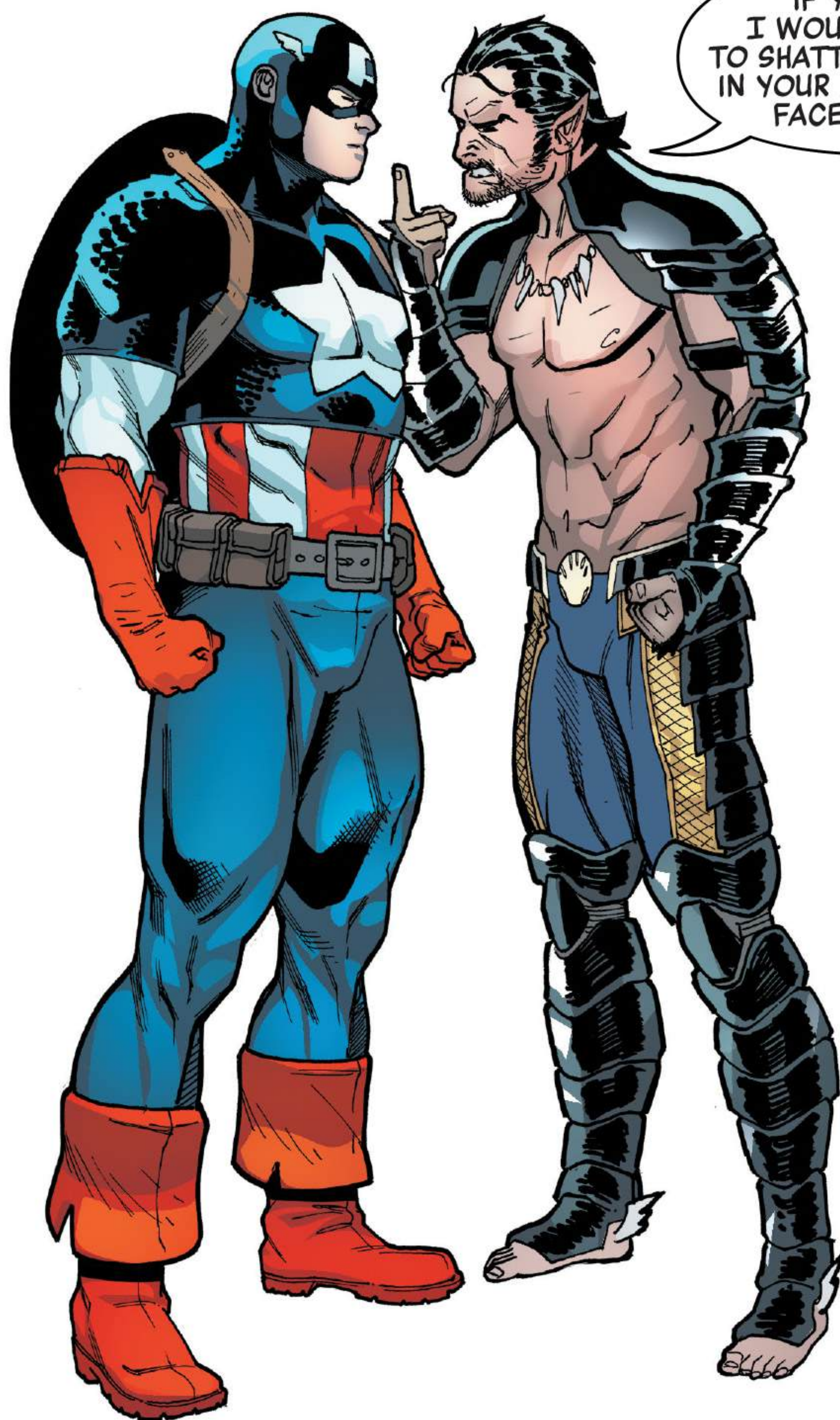


SO JUST HOW BADLY DO YOU WANT THE PHOENIX, NAMOR? BAD ENOUGH TO KILL FOR IT?

HMPH.

BAD ENOUGH TO KILL ME?

BECAUSE THAT'S **EXACTLY** WHAT YOU'LL HAVE TO DO IF THAT BELL DINGS AND YOU AND I ARE UP NEXT.



IF YOU THINK I WOULD **HESITATE** TO SHATTER EVERY BONE IN YOUR AIR-BREATHING FACE, ROGERS...

...MERELY BECAUSE I'VE ALLOWED YOU THE HONOR OF FIGHTING BY MY SIDE IN THE PAST...

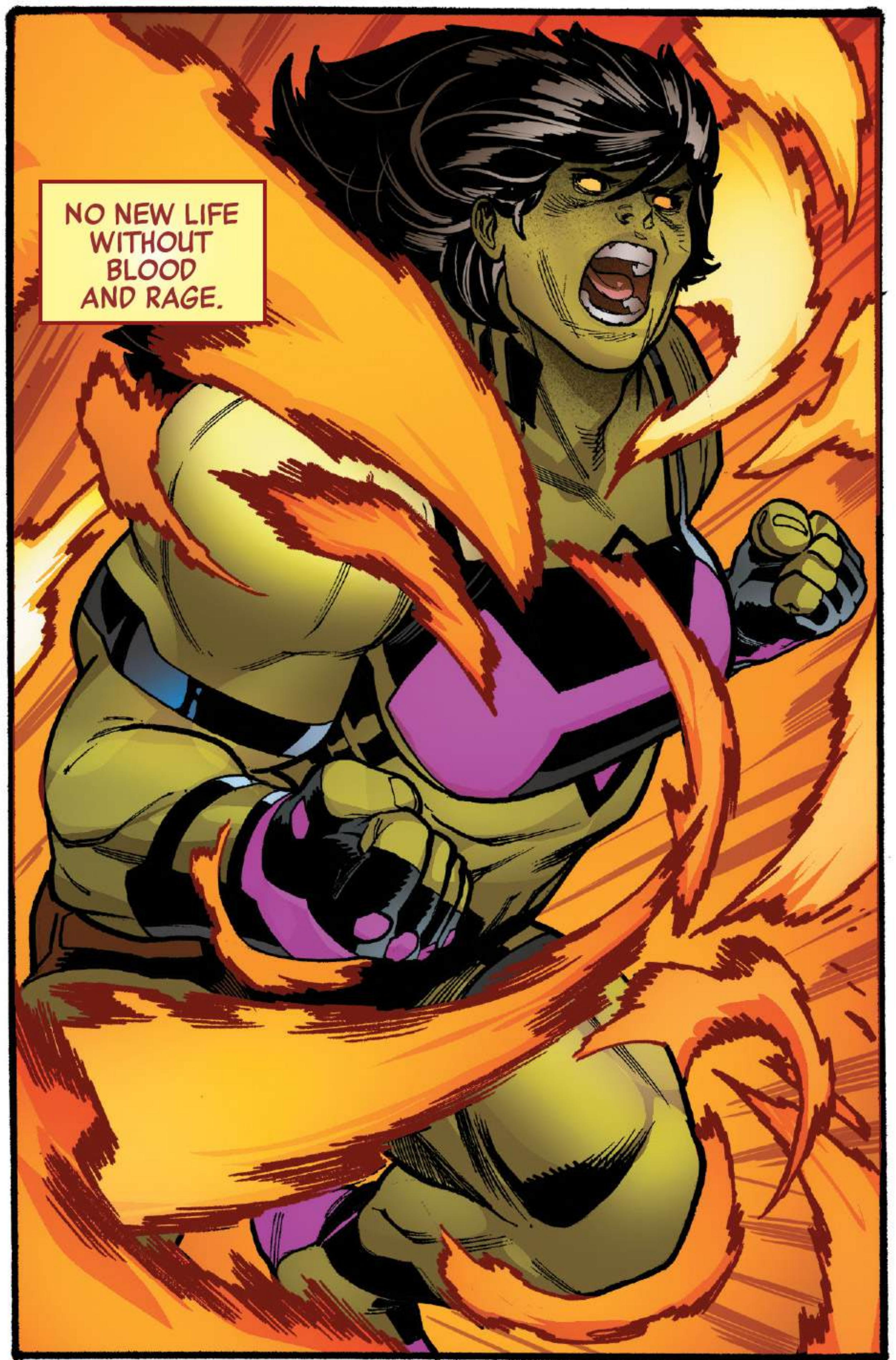
...THEN YOU UNDERSTAND **NOTHING** OF NAMOR AND WHAT I WILL DO TO PROTECT THE PEOPLE OF THE SEA.



BELIEVE ME, I KNOW BETTER THAN ANYONE WHAT YOU CAN DO.

AND ALSO EVERY SINGLE THING YOU **CAN'T**.

SO IS IT JUST **US**, THEN?



FROM FIRE, THE
PHOENIX MADE
ALL THAT IS.



AND TO FIRE,
ALL THINGS
MUST RETURN.



BUT FIRST, A
NEW WORM MUST
BE CHOSEN.



YEAH. I
WAS AFRAID
OF THIS.

DON'T SUPPOSE
THE BIRD WILL LET
US SETTLE THINGS
WITH ROCK, PAPER,
SCISSORS?

I SUSPECT
NOT, MY FRIEND.



ONLY
SHIELD AND
CLAWS WILL
DO.

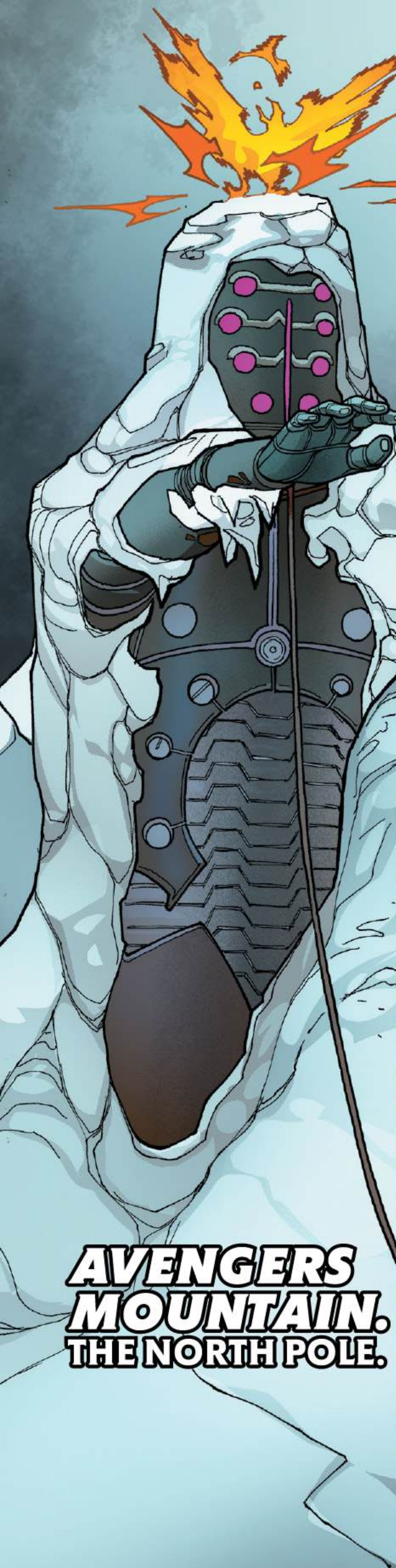
TODAY
THAT WILL
BE DECIDED.

NO MATTER
WHOSE
BLOOD MUST
BE SPILLED.

TODAY THE
NEW PHOENIX
WILL BE BORN.

44 ENTER THE PHOENIX PART 5
"I AM...PHOENIX!"





**AVENGERS
MOUNTAIN.
THE NORTH POLE.**



YOU'VE
BEEN WORKING ON
YOUR SIDE KICK,
CAPTAIN.



IT'S BEEN A
WHALE OF A YEAR,
PANTHER. I'VE BEEN
WORKING ON
EVERYTHING.

AND I SEE
YOU FINALLY
GOT RID OF THAT
HITCH IN YOUR
ROUNDHOUSE.



WHAT
HITCH IN
MY--

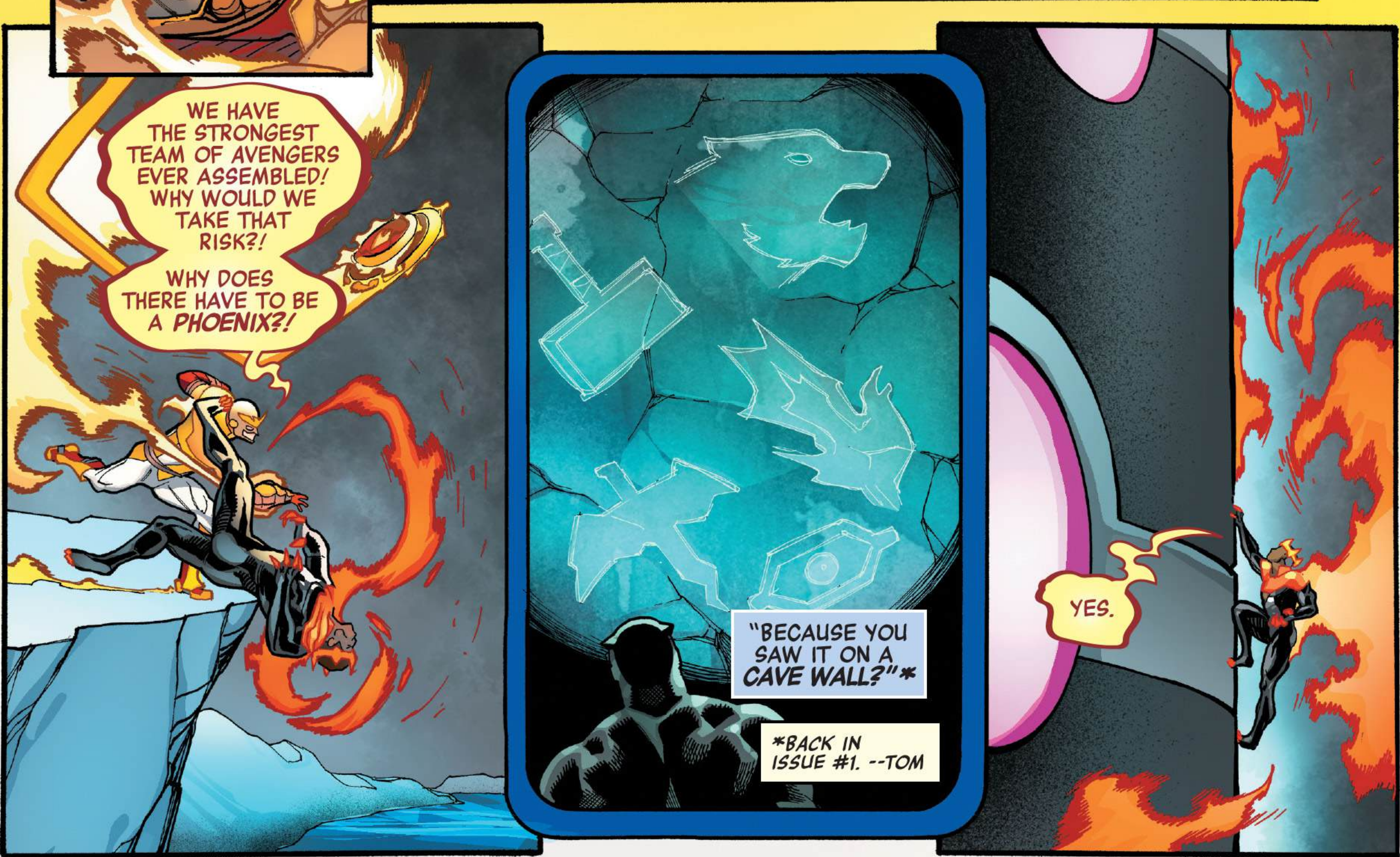
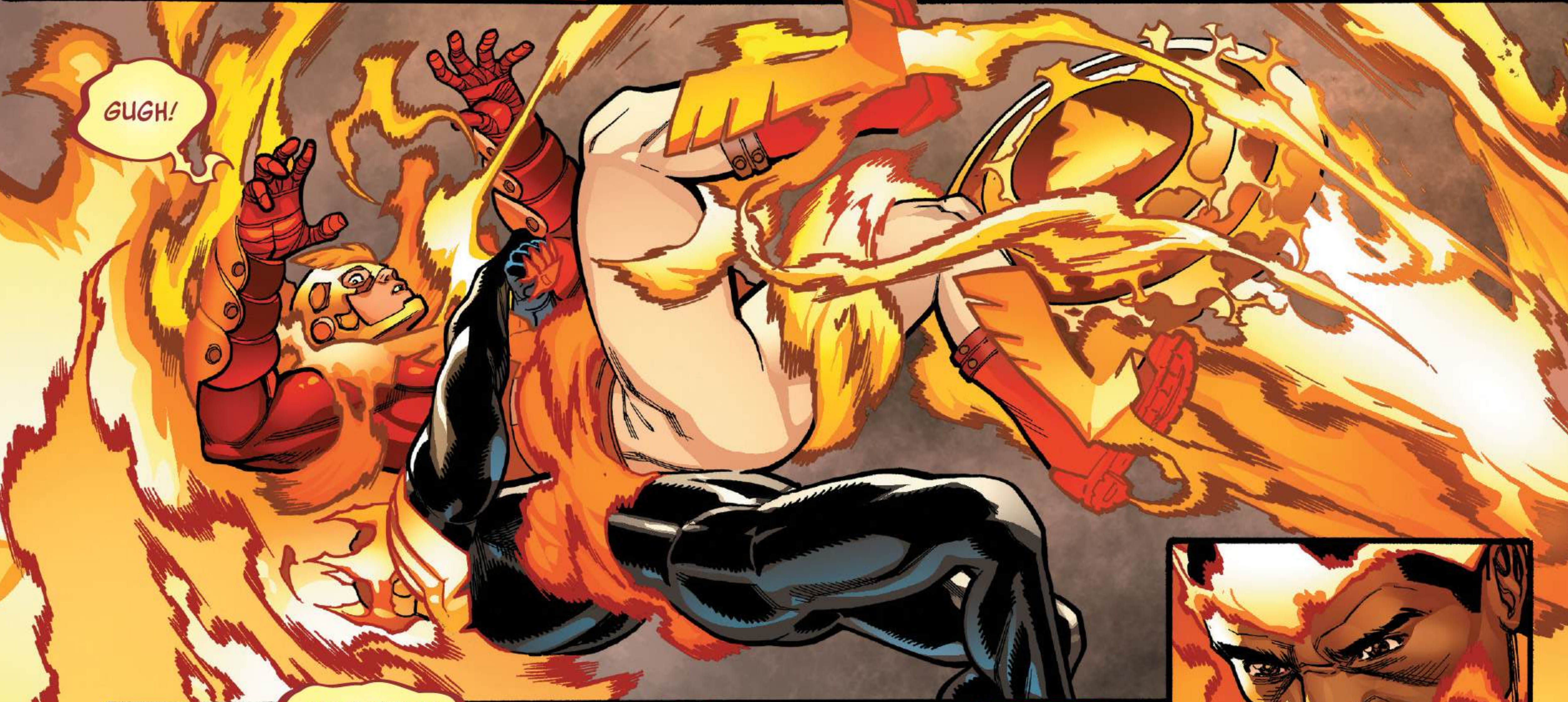
UGGH!



AND THEY
CALL *ME* THE
DEVIOUS
ONE.

I'M NOT
THE ONE WHO
KICKED LOGAN IN
THE COBBLERS.

TELL ME
WE'RE NOT JUST
FIGHTING *EACH
OTHER* HERE,
T'CHALLA.





SINCE I
DISCOVERED THOSE
**MILLION-YEAR-OLD CAVE
PAINTINGS**, STARK HAS COME
**FACE-TO-FACE WITH THE
PREHISTORIC HEROES**
THEY REPRESENTED.

THOR HAS
BECOME THE
ALL-FATHER
OF ASGARD.

ROBERTO HAS
GROWN INTO THE
MOST POWERFUL
GHOST RIDER THE
WORLD'S EVER
SEEN.



THE
STARBRAND
HAS BEEN
REBORN.

AND A
BLACK PANTHER
LEADS THE
AVENGERS.

THE SPIRITS
OF THE PAST
ARE SPEAKING TO
US, STEVEN.



WE
NEED THE
PHOENIX.

OR ELSE
THE EARTH MAY
NOT SURVIVE
THIS **AGE OF
CHAOS**.



AND WHAT
IF IT'S THE
PHOENIX WE
WON'T
SURVIVE?

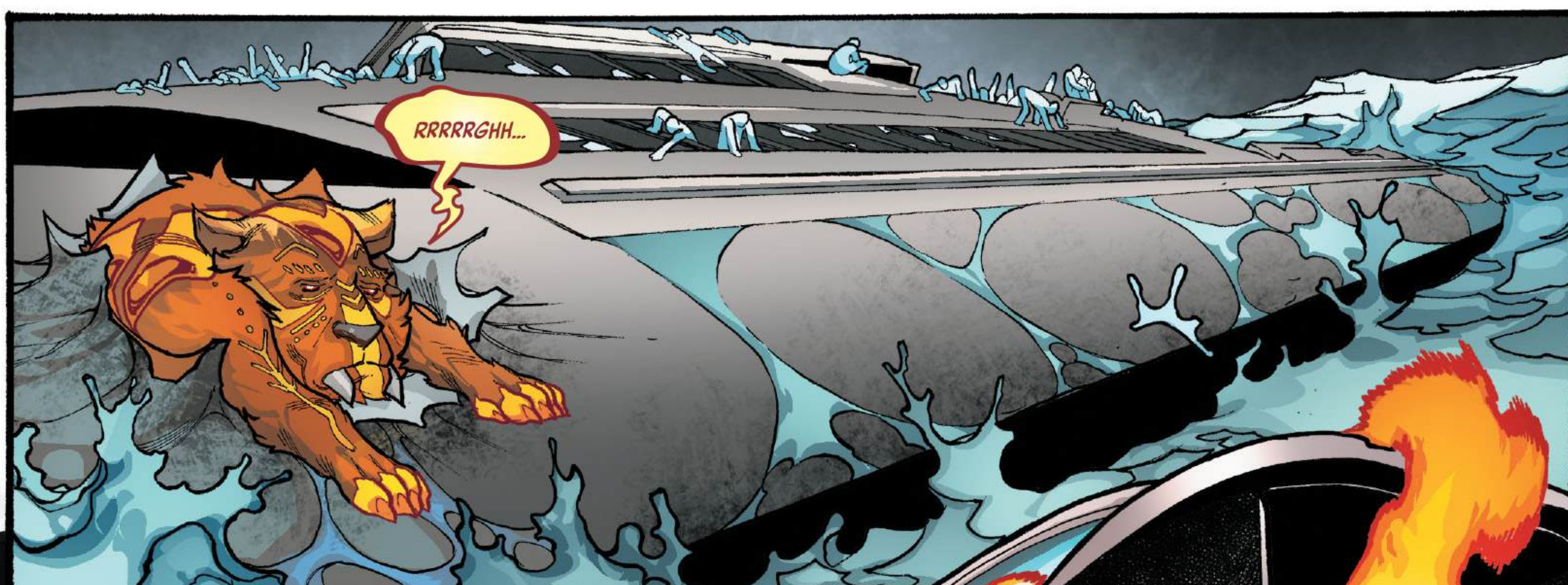
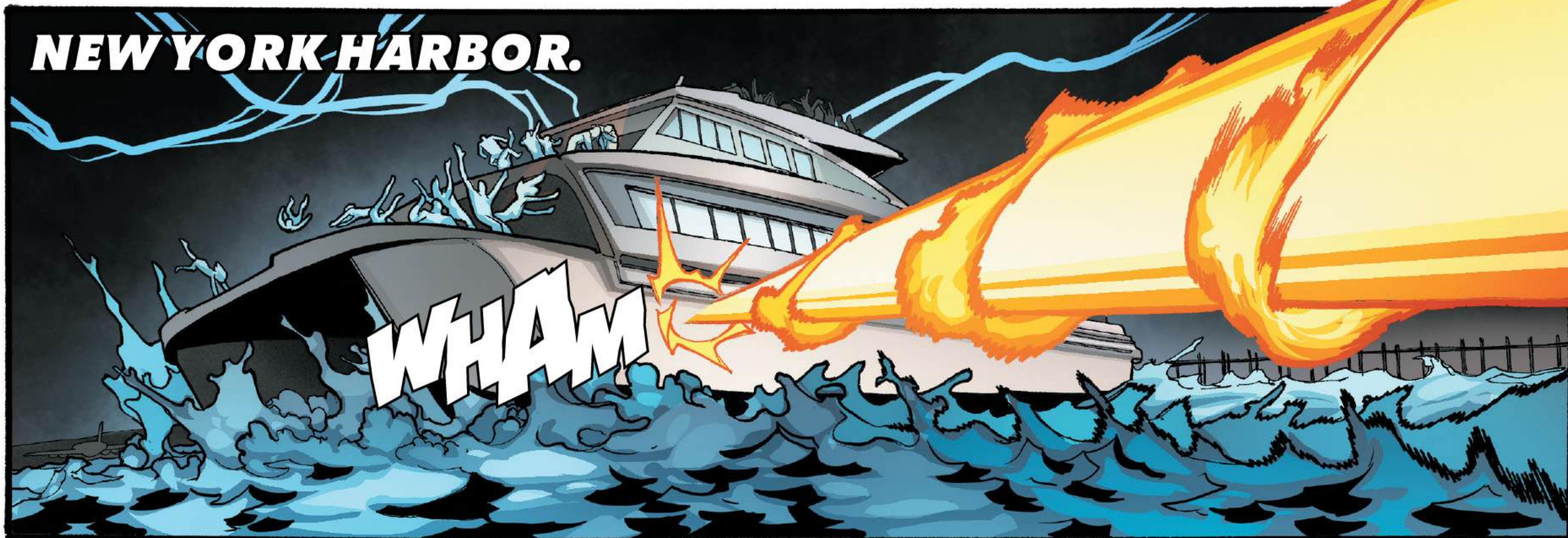


THE BURNING
HAS BEGUN, MY
FRIEND. AND IF WE
ARE NOT THE ONES
HOLDING THE
TORCH...



...IT MEANS
WE ARE TIED TO
THE STAKE.

NEW YORK HARBOR.





HHRRRGH!

YOU LIKE
TO PLAY IN THE
JUNGLE, BUT YOU'RE
TOO **PRETTY** TO
BELONG WITH THE
ANIMALS.

NO ONE
HAS EVER CALLED
ME **PRETTY**.

I AM MADE
OF **SCABS** AND
SCARS! MY LIFE HAS
BEEN SPENT BEING
GROUND INTO A
LIVING WEAPON!

NOW I'LL
BE THE **RED WIDOW**
WHO ASSASSINATES
WORLDS!

I AM **FIRE**
AND **DEATH**
INCARNATE!
I AM--

YOU
THINK YOU'RE
SAVAGE?!

LADY, I'LL
SHOW YOU
SAVAGE!

I'M **SHANNA**,
THE **FLAMING**
SHE-DEVIL, **QUEEN**
OF THE **SAVAGE**
FLAME!

I
AM...

**MOSCOW.
RED SQUARE.**

«AEROSPACE
DEFENSE TO HIGH
COMMAND. WE ARE
UNABLE TO SHOOT
DOWN THE
TARGETS.»

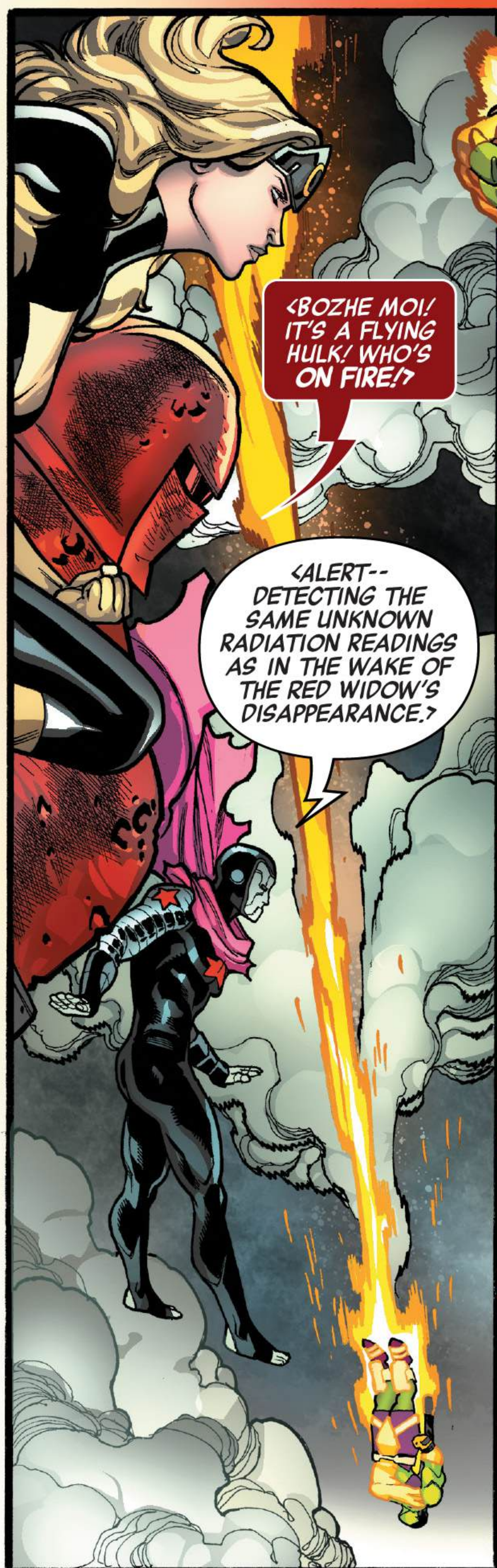
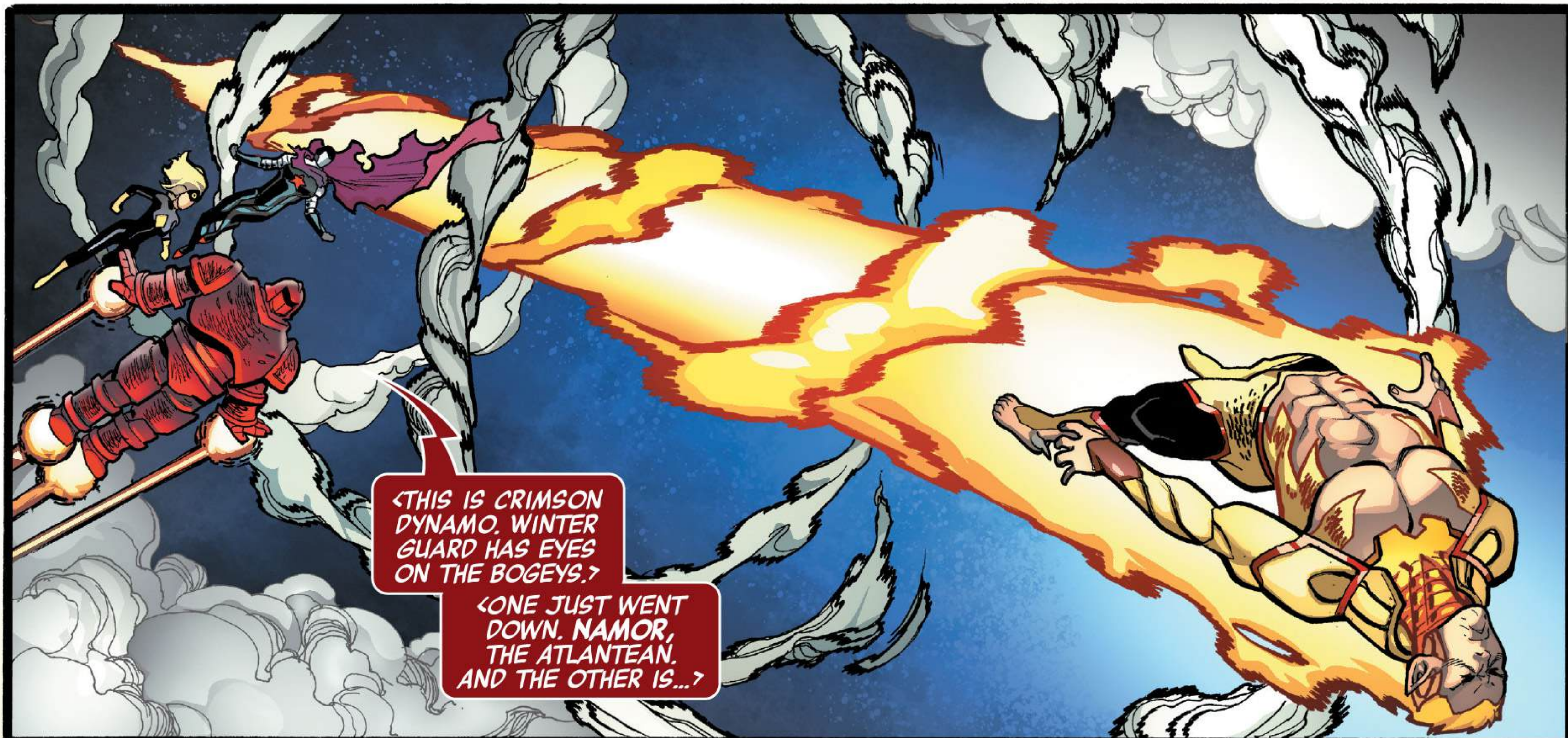
«REQUESTING
THE WINTER GUARD!
REPEAT--REQUESTING
RUSSIA'S MIGHTIEST
HEROES!?»

YOU CAN'T
HANDLE BEING A
PHOENIX! BY THE
LEVIATHAN, LOOK
AT YOURSELF,
JENNIFER!

YOU
CAN'T EVEN
HANDLE BEING
A HULK!

DON'T
CARE ABOUT
PHOENIX.

JUST
CARE ABOUT
SMASHING
YOU!





YOU COULDN'T PROTECT ATLANTIS IN YOUR COURTROOMS! COULDN'T PROTECT IT AS AN AVENGER! SO I WILL DO WHAT IS NECESSARY! WITH THE POWER OF THE--



GAAAAARRGGGH!!!



NAMOR CAN'T HANDLE BEING PHOENIX!

CAN'T EVEN HANDLE HAVING ARMS!



YOU'VE NEVER WIELDED THIS COSMIC POWER BEFORE.

I HAVE.

HHGHK!

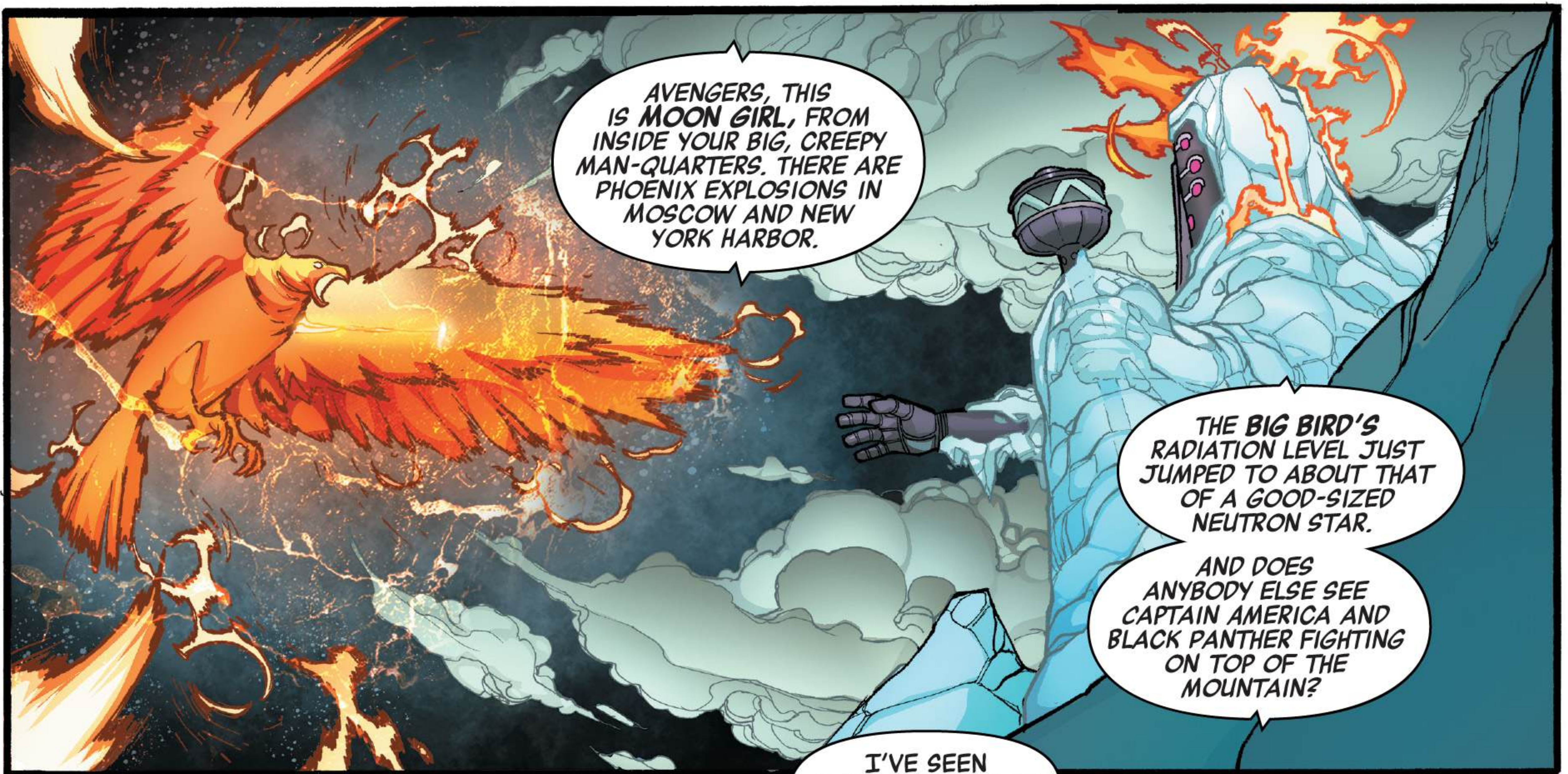


AS IT WAS IN THE DAYS OF UTOPIA, SO IT SHALL BE AGAIN!

I AM NAMOR, THE STAR-MARINER!

I AM--





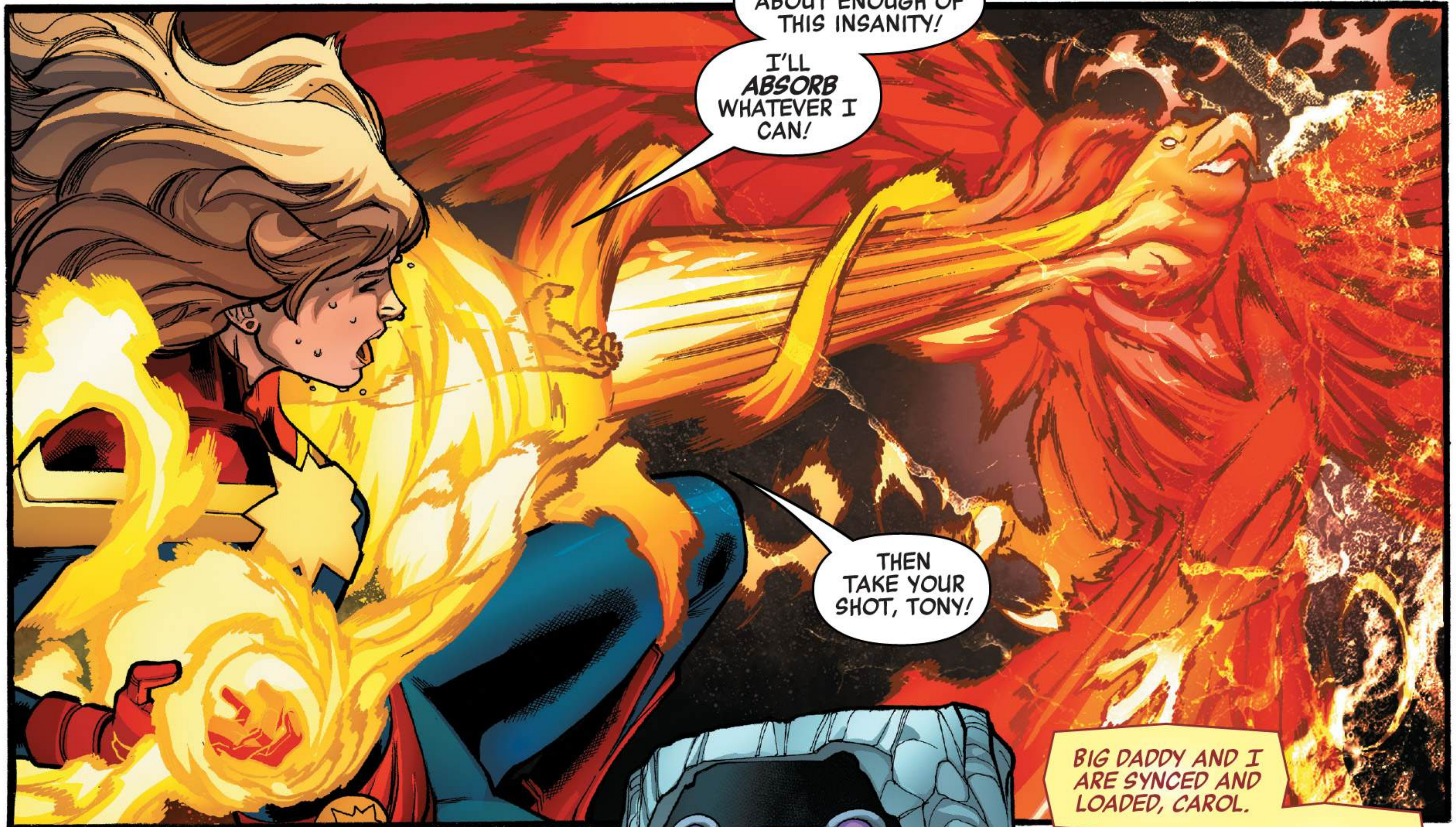
AVENGERS, THIS IS **MOON GIRL**, FROM INSIDE YOUR BIG, CREEPY MAN-QUARTERS. THERE ARE PHOENIX EXPLOSIONS IN MOSCOW AND NEW YORK HARBOR.

THE **BIG BIRD'S** RADIATION LEVEL JUST JUMPED TO ABOUT THAT OF A GOOD-SIZED NEUTRON STAR.

AND DOES ANYBODY ELSE SEE CAPTAIN AMERICA AND BLACK PANTHER FIGHTING ON TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN?

I'VE SEEN ABOUT ENOUGH OF THIS INSANITY!

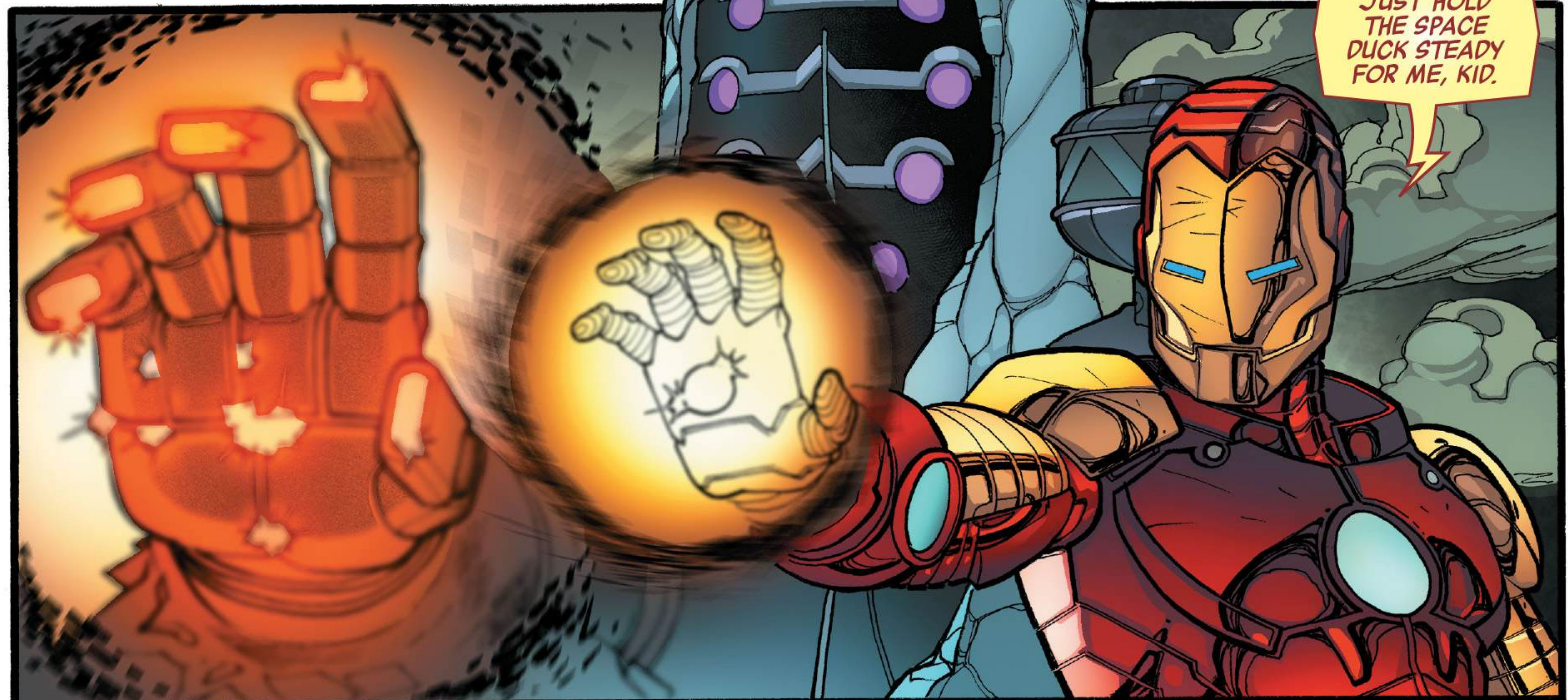
I'LL **ABSORB** WHATEVER I CAN!



THEN TAKE YOUR SHOT, TONY!

BIG DADDY AND I ARE SYNCED AND LOADED, CAROL.

JUST HOLD THE SPACE DUCK STEADY FOR ME, KID.





ALL HELL
COULDN'T
DRAG IT AWAY,
MR. STARK!



no,
UNHAND THE
PHOENIX!

UNHAND my
MOTHER!

THOR'S
COMPLETELY LOST
HIS MIND! THE
ALL-WEAPON WON'T
HOLD HIM FOR
LONG!

AVENGERS!
TAKE THAT
VULTURE
DOWN!



"BEFORE
SOMEBODY
DIES!"



PRETTY SURE
I DIED TODAY.



DEFINITELY
FELT LIKE
DYING.

THE BURNING COLD,
THE FEELING OF
FALLING FOREVER
THROUGH DARKNESS.

BUT THEN I FELT
SOMETHING ELSE.



FELT *EMBERS*
INSIDE ME
THAT REFUSED
TO GO OUT.

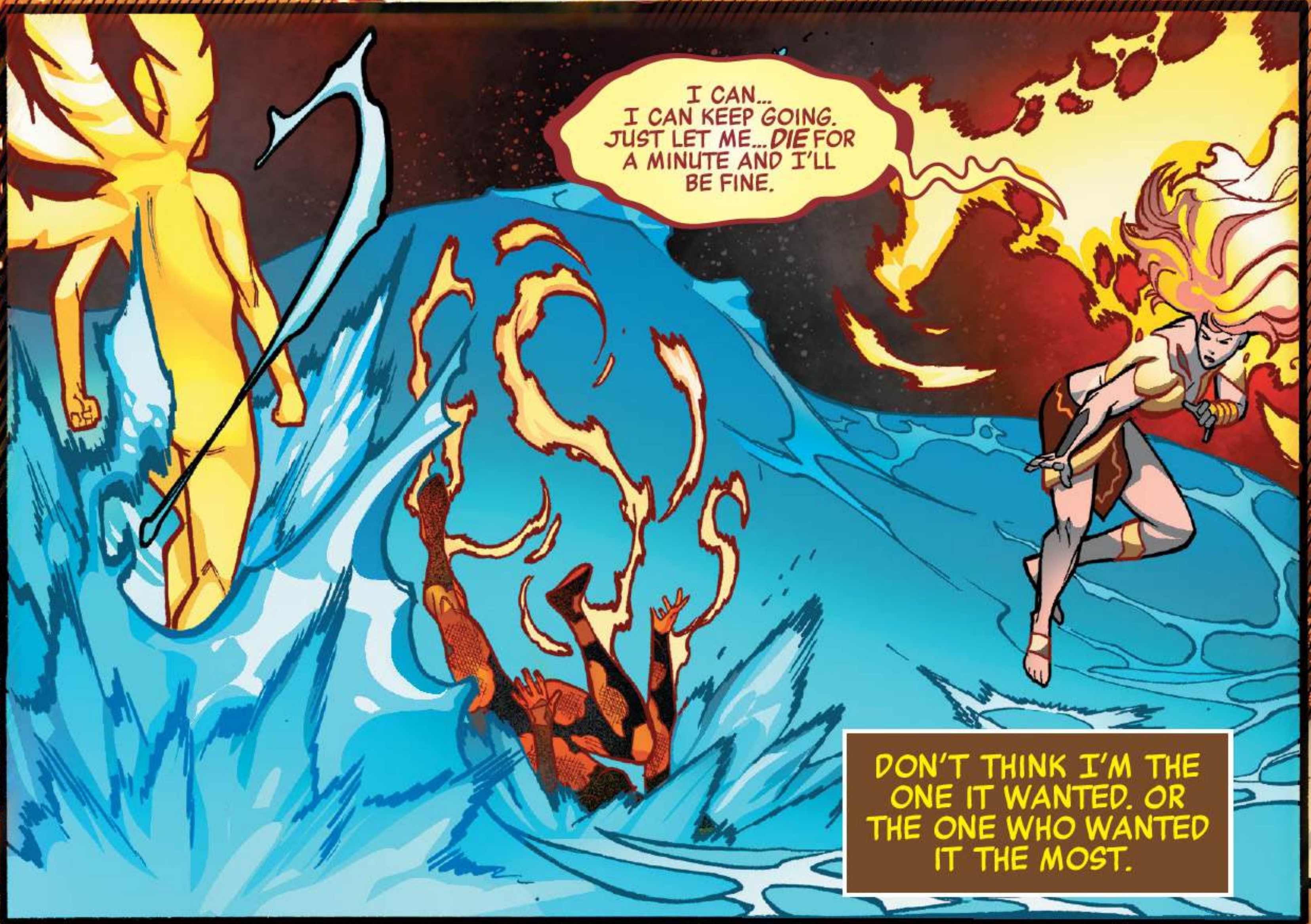


I FELT MYSELF
GROW WINGS.

WINGS
OF FIRE.

AAAAARRRGH!!!

DON'T THINK IT WAS SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN THIS WAY.



BUT JUDGING BY ALL THE NEW
MEMORIES OF TIMES LONG
PAST RUSHING THROUGH
MY HEAD, GETTING CHOSEN IS
NEVER ABOUT BEING A **WINNER**.

TO BE THE PHOENIX,
YOU HAVE TO
SUFFER. YOU HAVE
TO HAVE **FALLEN**.

JENNIFER.
IT'S ALL RIGHT.
YOUR FIGHT HAS
ENDED.

RRRRRRRRGGGGGHHH!!!

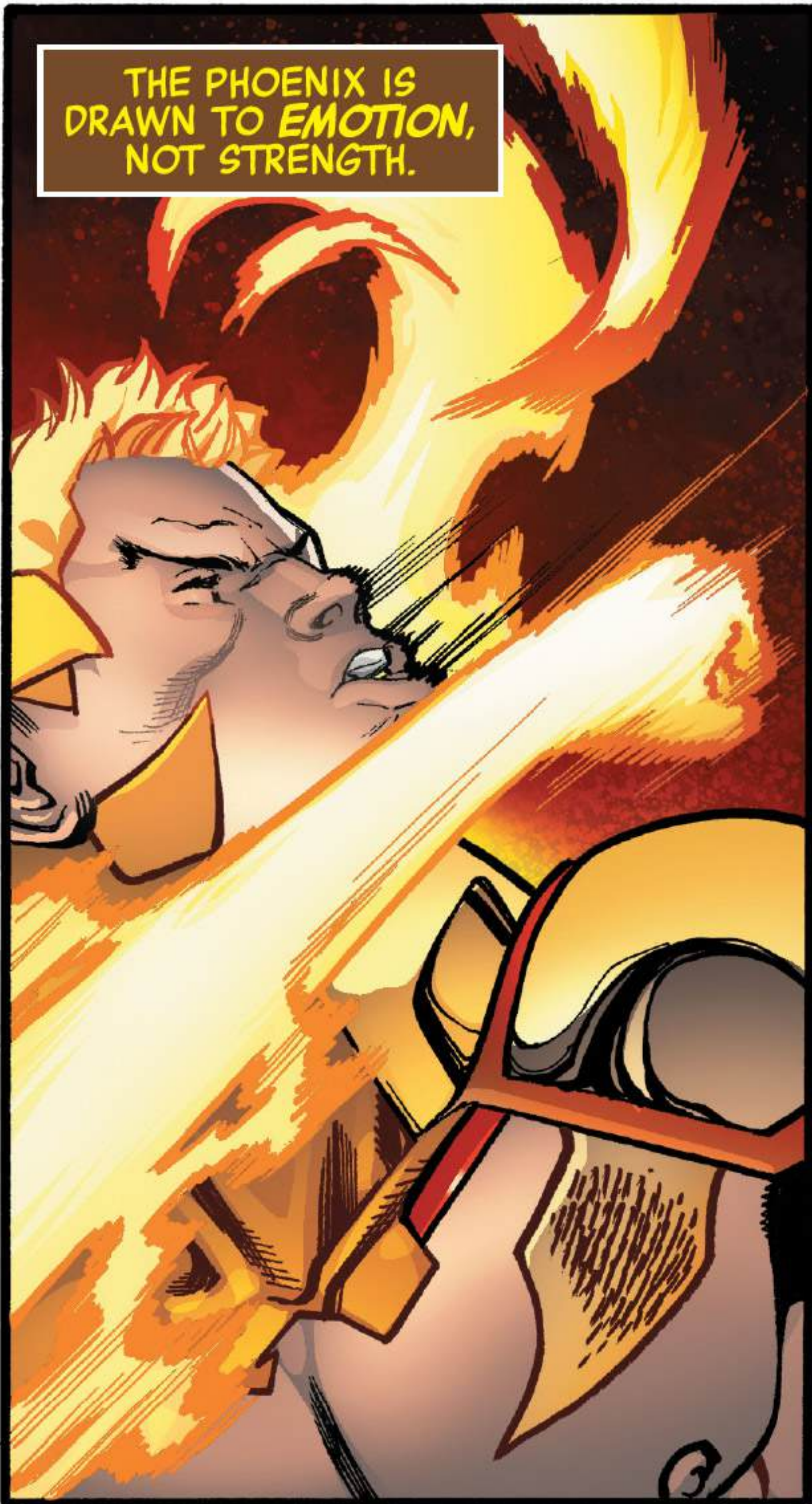
HHHRGH?

AND I
CERTAINLY
FELL.

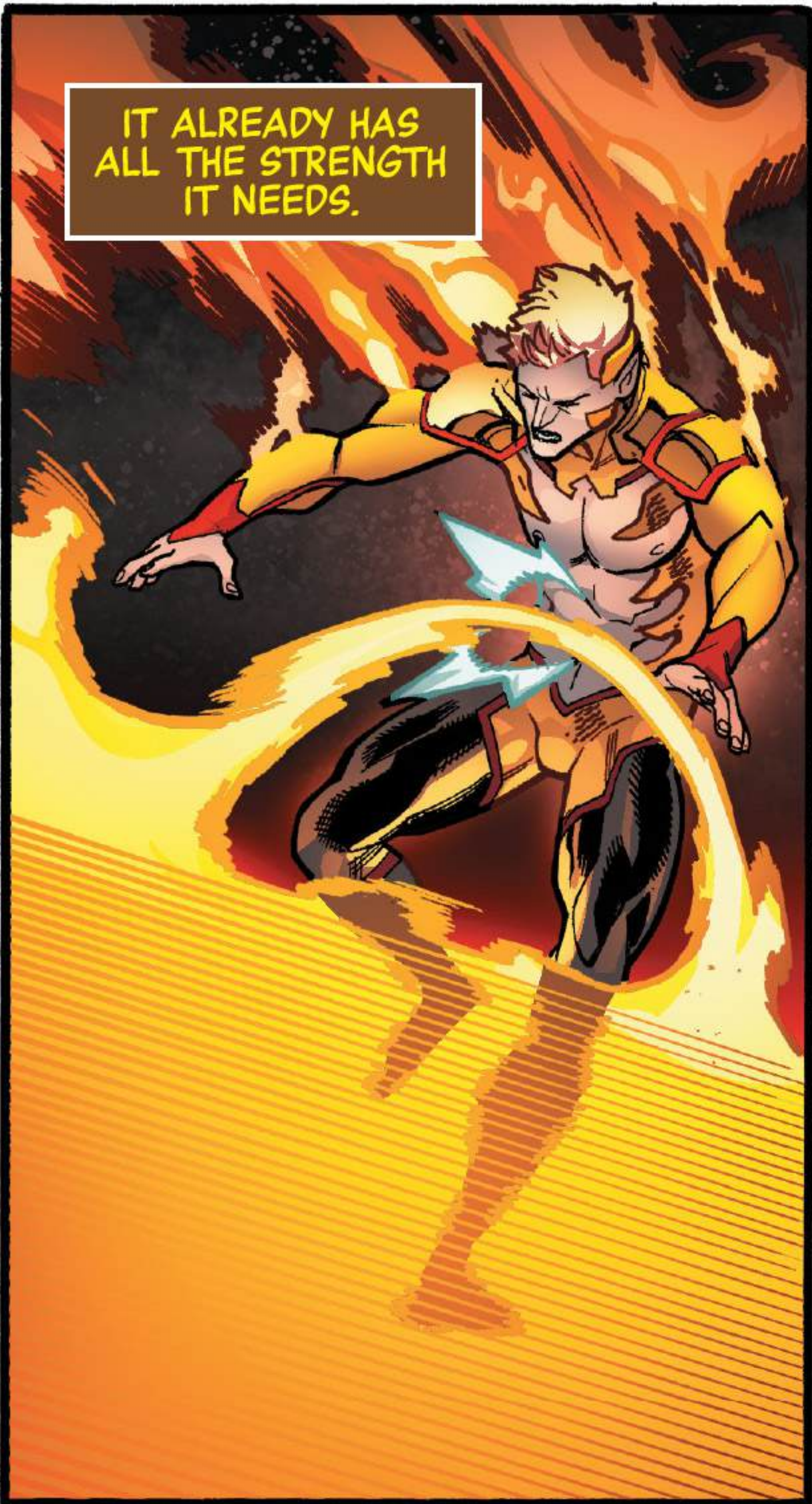
THOUGH NOT
WITHOUT SOMEONE
GIVING ME A **PUSH**.

THE POWER!
THERE'S **MORE**
OF IT HERE--I
CAN FEEL IT!

IT'S MINE!
NAMOR WILL BE
THE LAST PHOENIX
STANDING
WHEN--



THE PHOENIX IS
DRAWN TO *EMOTION*,
NOT STRENGTH.



IT ALREADY HAS
ALL THE STRENGTH
IT NEEDS.



GAGH!
WHO...

IT CAN ADAPT
ITSELF TO ITS
HOST, BUT IT HAS
NEVER HAD A
HOST CAPABLE
OF WIELDING IT
IN SO MANY
DIFFERENT WAYS.



ABLE TO FIGHT
IN ANY STYLE. WITH
ANY WEAPON.

AAARRGH!



THAT MOVE...
THAT'S *ATLANTEAN*
KRAKEN-STYLE MARTIAL
ARTS. WHO THE DEVIL
ARE YOU?

WITH MY HANDS MORE THAN MY MIND.
TO TAKE SOMETHING SO GRAND AND
ESOTERIC AS A PLANET-BURNING BIRD
OF COSMIC REBIRTH...

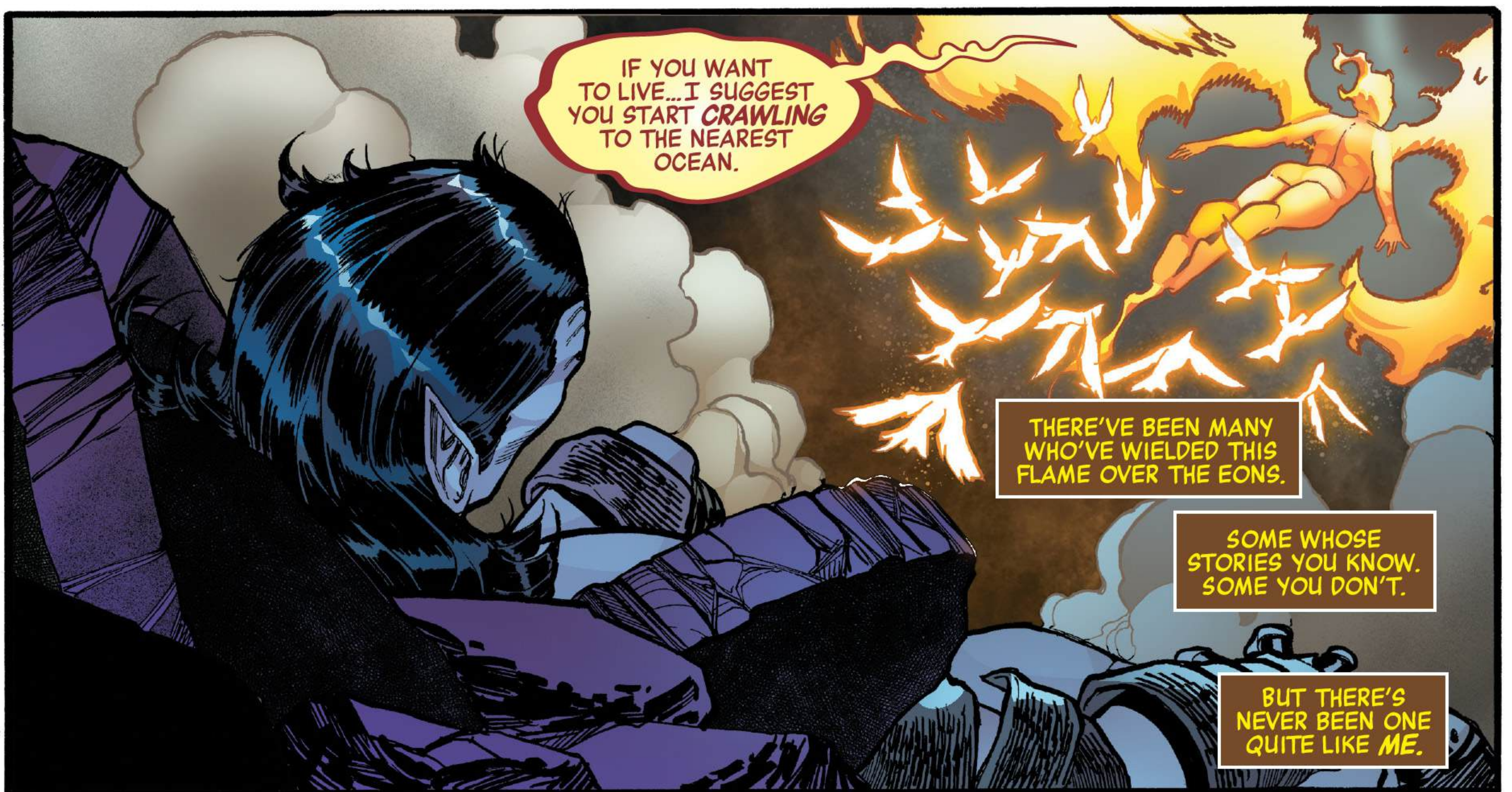


...AND CHANNEL
IT INTO MY
KNUCKLES.



UUGGHHKK...

I'VE JUST
PUNCHED EVERY
LAST OUNCE OF
SEAWATER OUT
OF YOUR
BODY.



IF YOU WANT
TO LIVE...I SUGGEST
YOU START **CRAWLING**
TO THE NEAREST
OCEAN.

THERE'VE BEEN MANY
WHO'VE WIELDED THIS
FLAME OVER THE EONS.

SOME WHOSE
STORIES YOU KNOW.
SOME YOU DON'T.

BUT THERE'S
NEVER BEEN ONE
QUITE LIKE **ME**.



WAIT...THE
POWER'S LEAVING
BOTH OF US?

WHAT JUST
HAPPENED? WHICH
OF US WON?

IT'S NOT
LEAVING...



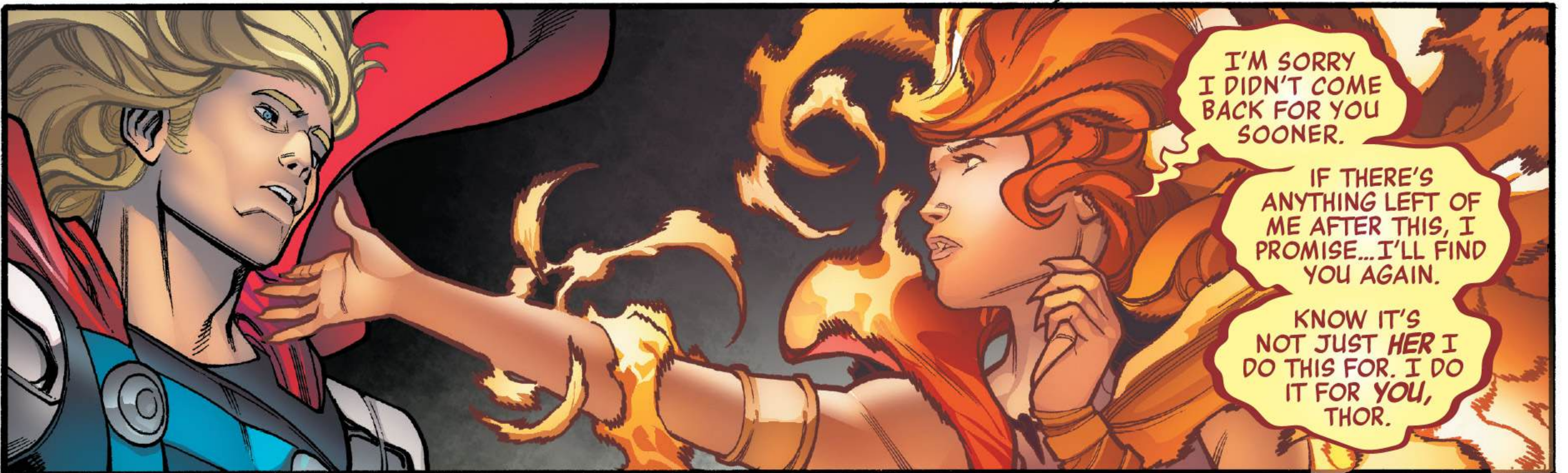
"IT'S BEING
TAKEN.
ALL OF IT."

MOTHER!



I WISH
WE'D HAD
MORE TIME,
MY SON.

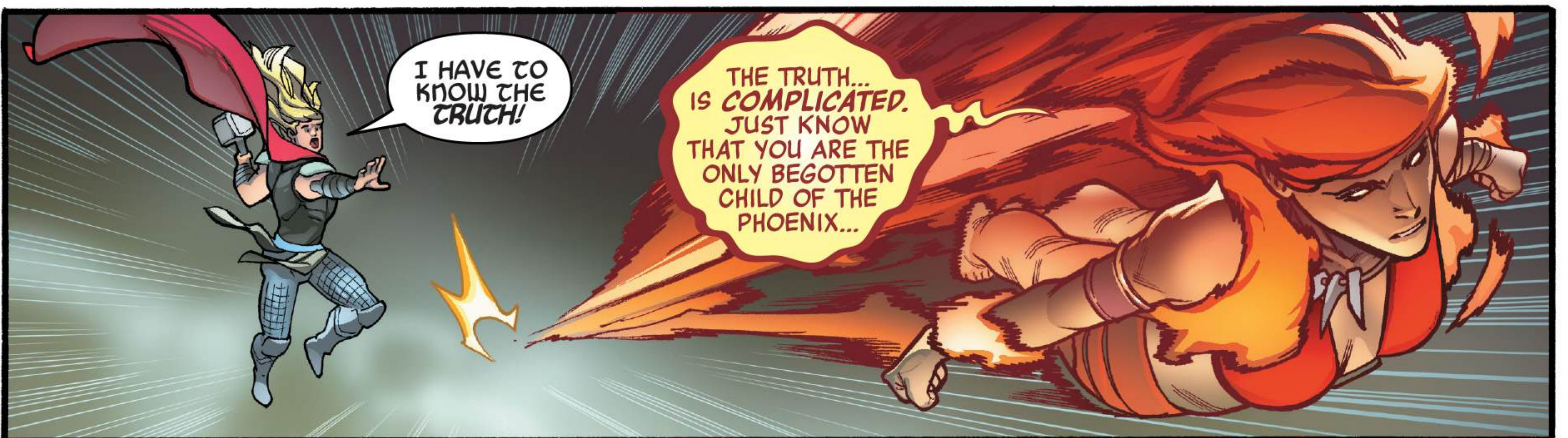
no!



I'M SORRY
I DIDN'T COME
BACK FOR YOU
SOONER.

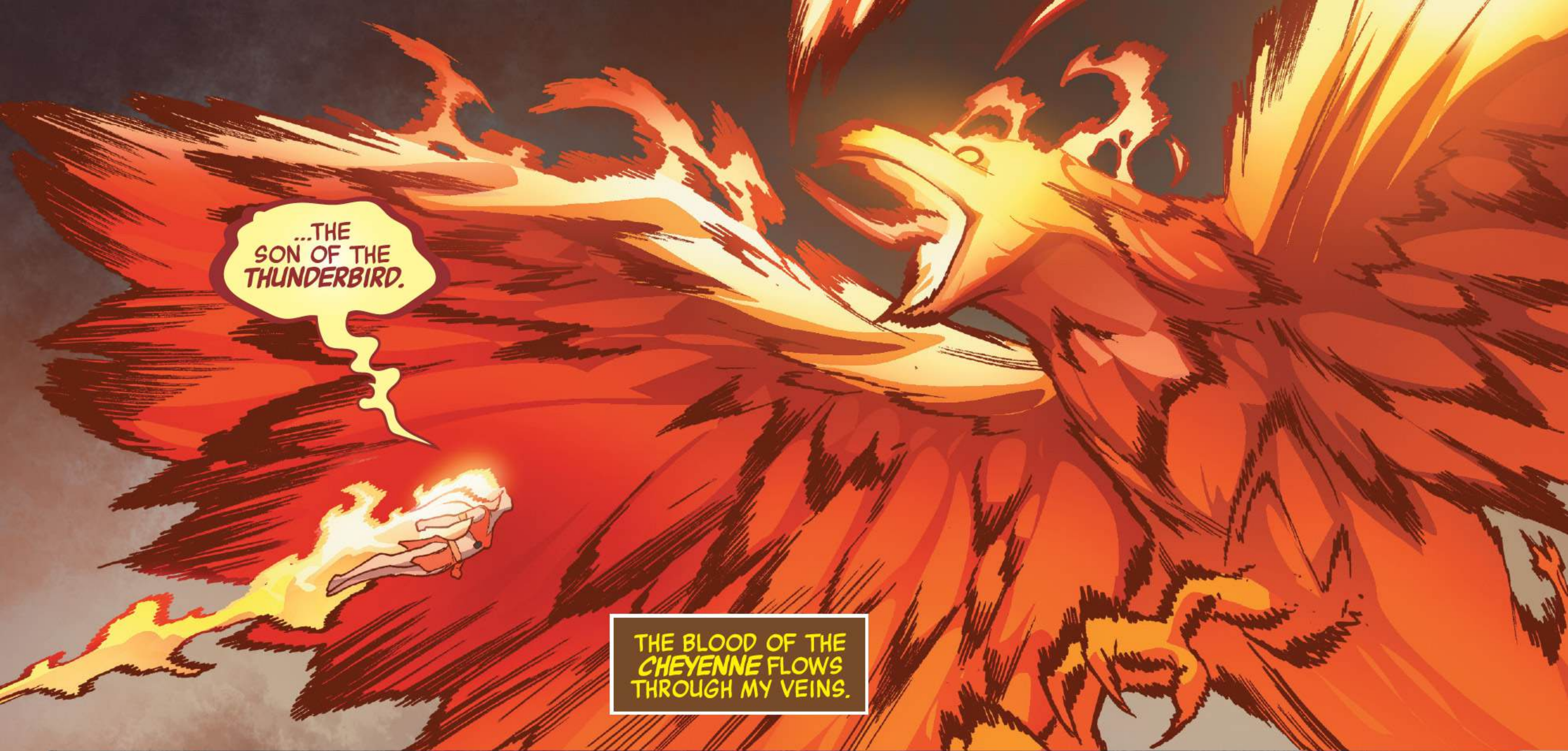
IF THERE'S
ANYTHING LEFT OF
ME AFTER THIS, I
PROMISE...I'LL FIND
YOU AGAIN.

KNOW IT'S
NOT JUST *HER* I
DO THIS FOR. I DO
IT FOR *YOU*,
THOR.



I HAVE TO
KNOW THE
TRUTH!

THE TRUTH...
IS **COMPLICATED.**
JUST KNOW
THAT YOU ARE THE
ONLY BEGOTTEN
CHILD OF THE
PHOENIX...



...THE
SON OF THE
THUNDERBIRD.

THE BLOOD OF THE
CHEYENNE FLOWS
THROUGH MY VEINS.



nooo!!!!

LIKE MANY OF THE NATIVE TRIBES,
MY PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED
IN A WINGED SPIRIT OF *CHANGE*.



A GREAT BIRD OF
FIRE THAT BRINGS
THE SUMMER.



THAT PROTECTS US FROM THE
THINGS THAT WOULD *FEED* ON US,
IN THE DARKNESS AND THE SEA.

IN THE LONG,
COLD WINTER.

TODAY, FOR BETTER
OR WORSE, I HAVE
BECOME THAT CHANGE.

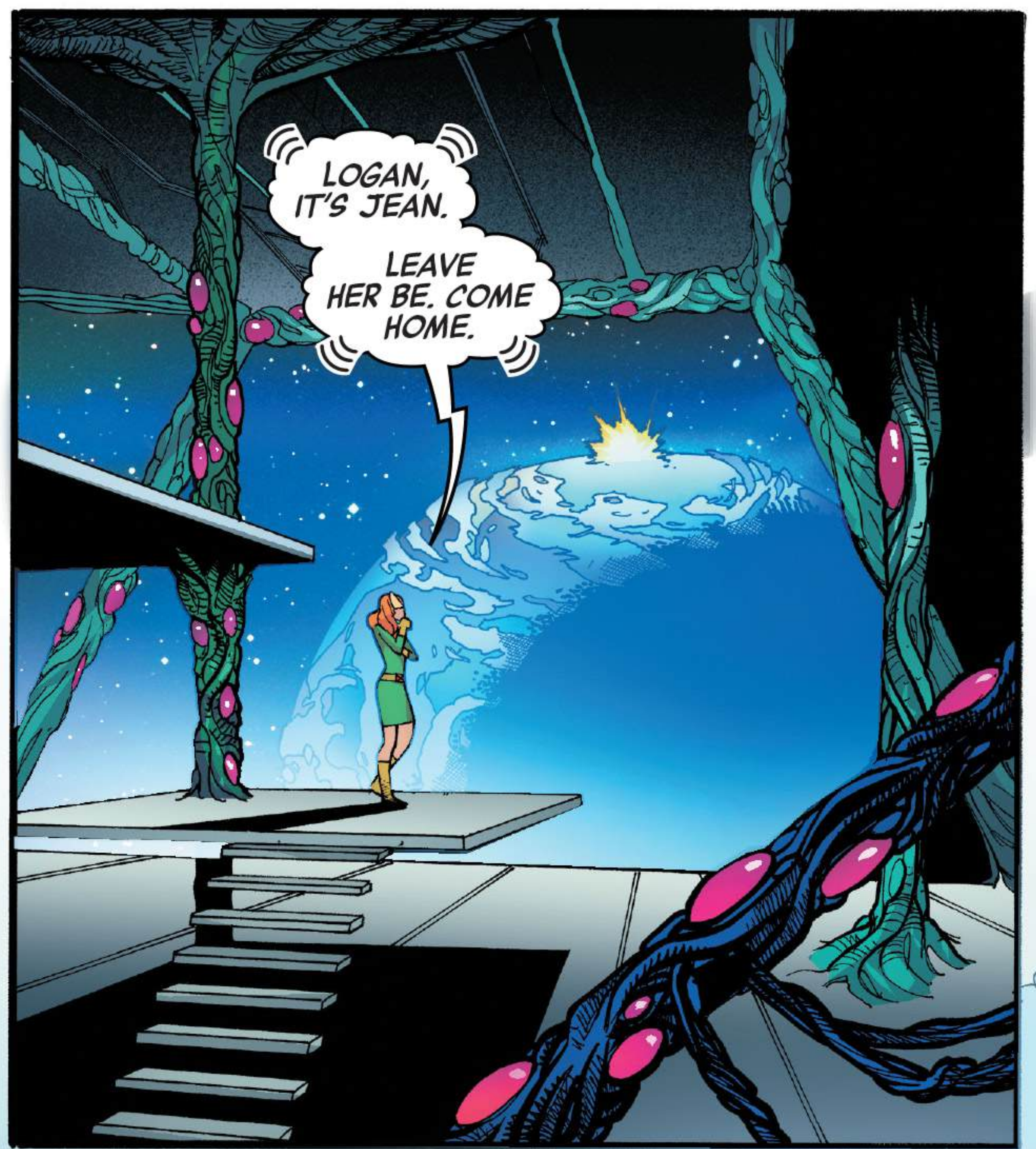
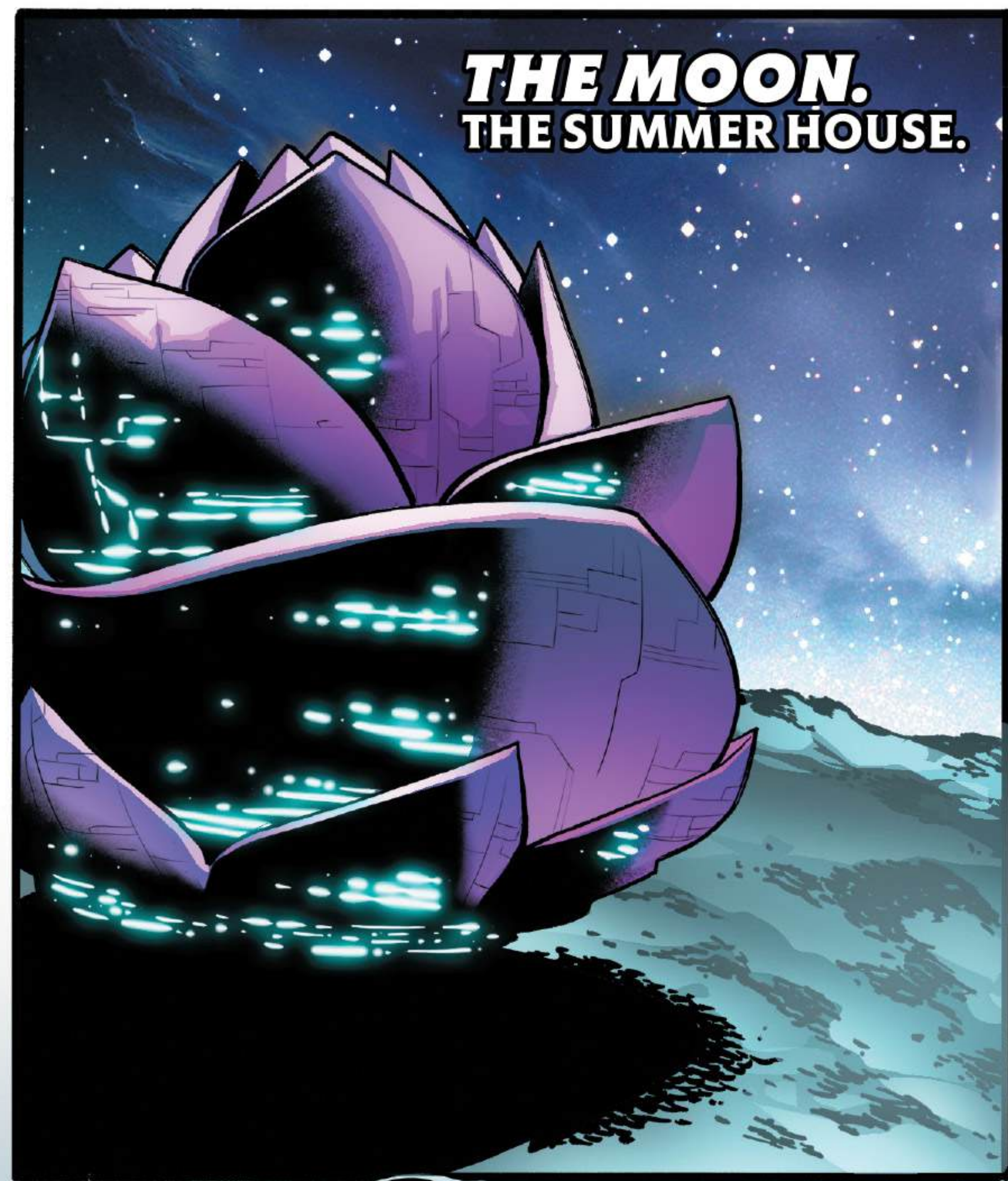
A full-page comic book illustration of Maya Lopez standing amidst a massive, intense fire. She is wearing a black and yellow superhero suit with a star emblem on the chest and has her arms outstretched. The fire is depicted with bright yellow and orange flames and sharp, blade-like shapes. Four speech bubbles are positioned around her, containing her name and her identity as the Phoenix.

MY NAME IS
MAYA LOPEZ.

AND I AM AN ECHO
OF ALL THE FIRE
AND LIFE THAT'S
COME BEFORE ME.

I AM THE
THUNDERBIRD
OF OLD AND OF
TOMORROW.

I AM THE
PHOENIX.



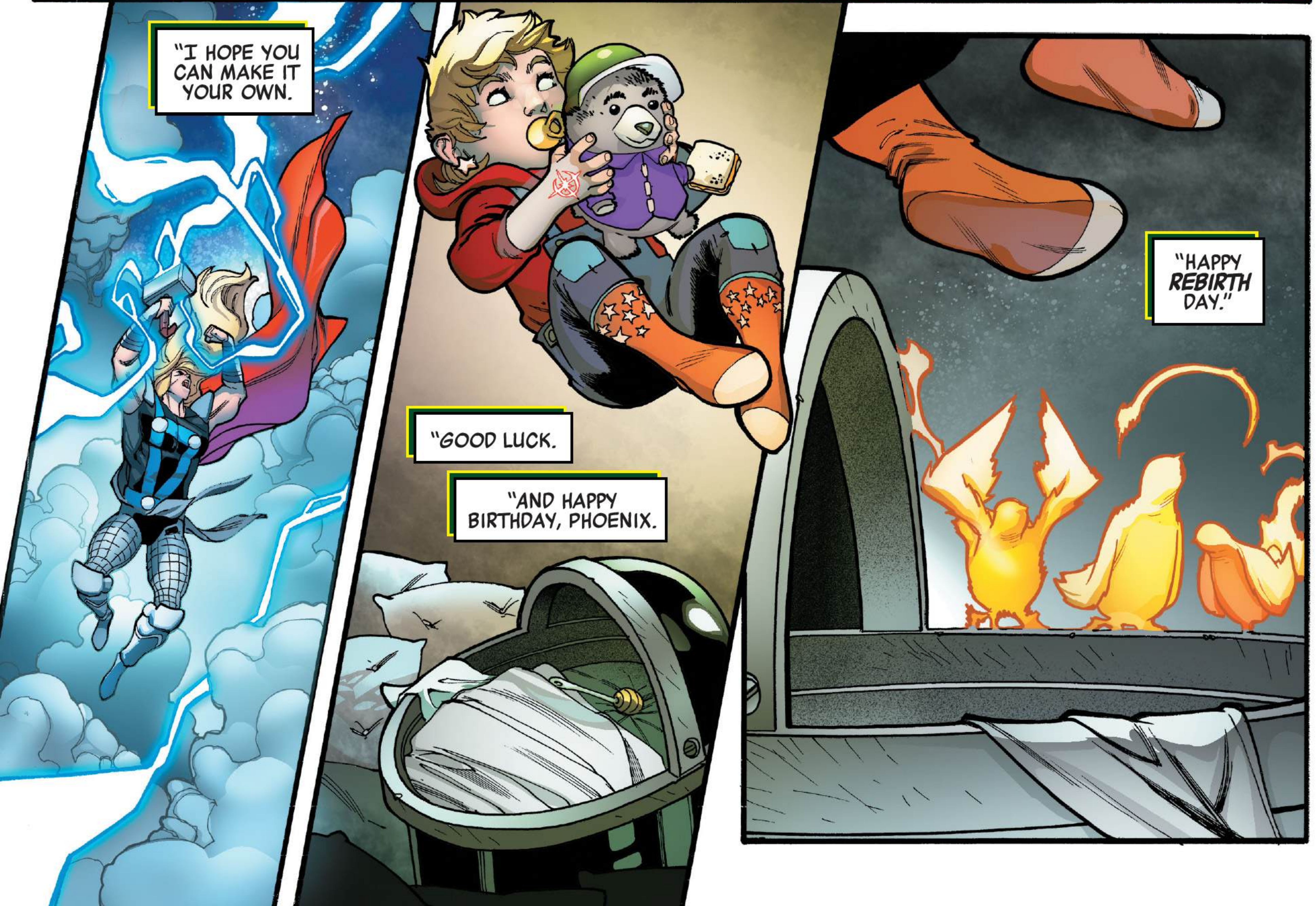


"YOU'RE A LONER. IT LIKES LONERS. BUT YOU CAN'T LET IT ISOLATE YOU FROM THE THINGS THAT MAKE YOU HUMAN."



"NOT IF YOU WANT TO KEEP YOUR SOUL."

"AND I HOPE FOR ALL OUR SAKES YOU DO."



"I HOPE YOU CAN MAKE IT YOUR OWN."

"GOOD LUCK."

"AND HAPPY BIRTHDAY, PHOENIX."

"HAPPY REBIRTH DAY."



PREVIOUSLY IN *KING IN BLACK*:

KNULL, THE CREATOR AND GOD OF THE ALIEN SYMBIOTES, LED A HORDE OF SYMBIOTE DRAGONS TO EARTH. THE EARTH'S HEROES, INCLUDING THE AVENGERS, MANAGED TO DEFEAT KNULL AFTER A MIGHTY BATTLE AND GREAT SACRIFICE. MEMBERS OF THE AVENGERS ALSO WERE FORCED TO PARTICIPATE IN A TOURNAMENT TO DETERMINE THE NEW HOST OF THE COSMIC PHOENIX FORCE, WITH ECHO EMERGING THE VICTOR. AS THE AVENGERS DEAL WITH THE FALLOUT OF THESE RECENT EVENTS, OLD ENEMIES LURK IN THE SHADOWS—INCLUDING DRACULA AND HIS VAMPIRE NATION.



**YESTERDAY.
NEW YORK CITY.**
THE FINAL BATTLE AGAINST KNULL.

SO SAY YOU'RE THE
GHOST RIDER.

WORLD'S
HARDEST WORKING
SUPERNATURAL
GEARHEAD.

THE ONLY AVENGER
WHOSE LAST DAY JOB
PAID AN HOURLY WAGE.

AND IT'S THE MORNING
AFTER YOU AND ALL YOUR
MIGHTY FRIENDS WERE PART
OF THE EPIC BATTLE
TO SAVE THE EARTH...

...FROM THE KING OF THE
CREEPY SPACE GODS AND
HIS ARMY OF GOOEY
SUPER-DRAGONS.

**TODAY.
THE ARCTIC CIRCLE.
AVENGERS MOUNTAIN.**

YOU MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO
THINK YOU DESERVE TO TAKE THE
MORNING OFF, AM I RIGHT?

BUT THAT AIN'T THE WAY
THE PROCESS WORKS
AROUND THESE PARTS.

AVENGERS
DON'T
SLEEP IN.

4:41 A.M.
RIGHT CALF.
FEMORAL ARTERY
JOGGING TRACK.

YOU HAVE
JUST BROKEN THE
WORLD RECORD FOR
RUNNING THE MILE BY...
ONE MINUTE
AND 15--

DELETE FROM
RECORDS.

PLAY
1940S
DIXIELAND
JAZZ.



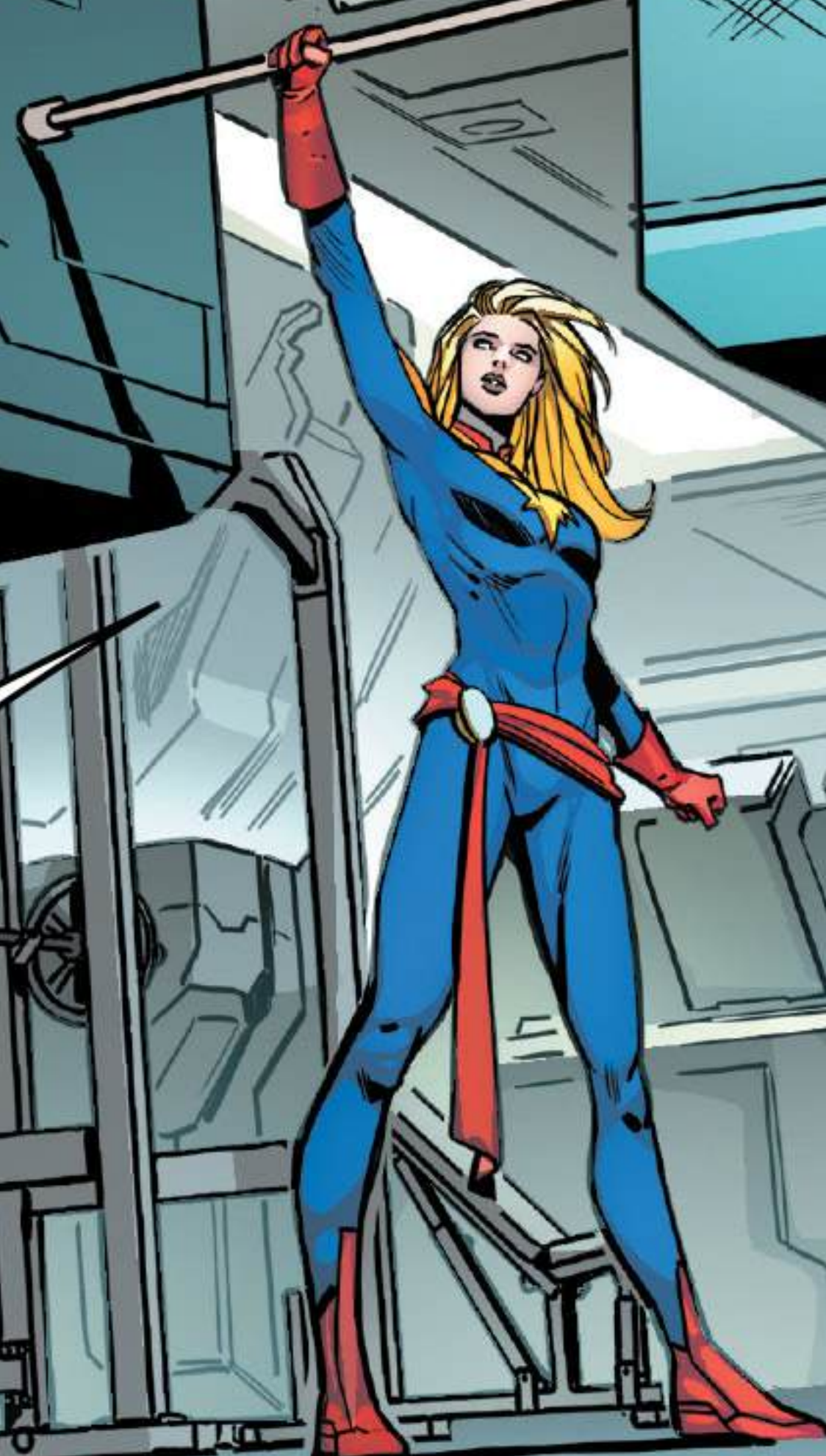
HERE AT THE *NORTH POLE*, WE'RE FARTHER FROM CIVILIZATION THAN ASTRONAUTS IN THEIR SPACE STATIONS.

5:13 A.M.
LEFT BICEP.
AVENGERS
STRENGTH AND
CONDITIONING
CENTER.

YOU HAVE JUST BROKEN THE WORLD RECORD FOR FREE LIFT BY 5,478 POU--

DELETE FROM RECORDS.

PLAY ENGINE SOUNDS OF THE XB-70 VALKYRIE.



SO WE MAKE OUR OWN CIVILIZATION. THE MOST EFFICIENT ONE YOU CAN IMAGINE.

5:24 A.M.
RIGHT LUNG.
LIBRARY OF
INTERGALACTIC LAW.

RGH!
GORILLA-MAN!
COFFEE!



HERE, WHERE ALL *TIME ZONES* MEET, ONE ROOM OF THE MOUNTAIN EXISTS HOURS APART FROM THE ONE NEXT DOOR.

5:38 A.M.
"MUSTACHE" MEZZANINE.
TONY STARK'S LOCKER ROOM.

CONGRATULATIONS, YOUR MODIFICATIONS HAVE INCREASED REPULSOR EFFICIENCY BY...1.5%.

DELETE THE WORD "CONGRATULATIONS" FROM YOUR VOCABULARY.

PLAY EXASPERATED SIGHS OF MY FATHER.



SO WE MAKE
OUR OWN TIME.

5:59 A.M.
APPENDIX.
THE EDEN ROOM.

MOUNTAIN!
THOR HAS RETURNED
FROM A NIGHT OF
CELEBRATING VICTORY!*
PLAY DRUMS AND
WAILING!

WARNING:
SCANS SHOW YOUR
SYSTEM CONTAINS ENOUGH
ALCOHOL TO ANESTHETIZE
A HERD OF FULL-
GROWN--

DELETE
FROM THY
RECORDS!

*CATCH THE CELEBRATION IN
BETA-RAY BILL #1. --TOM

SUNRISE HAPPENS
ONCE A YEAR AND
LASTS A MONTH.

6:03 A.M.
RIGHT FOOT.
SEA HANGAR.

MOUNTAIN.
PLAY IT
AGAIN.

HEY, ROBBIE!
IT'S ME, GABE,
YOUR BROTHER! I
LOVE YOU, ROBBIE!
JUST WANTED TO
SAY THAT IN CASE
YOU FORGOT!

HAVE A
GREAT DAY
AT WORK!

THE REST OF THE TIME,
THERE'S NOTHING HERE
BUT DARKNESS.

6:16 A.M.
LEFT FIST.
AUTOMATED
MANDROID
COMBAT RANGE.

TRAINING PROGRAM
"KILL ALL VAMPIRES"
HAS BEEN COMPLETED.
WOULD YOU LIKE
TO--

SHUT UP
AND RUN IT
AGAIN!

SO WE ARE OUR OWN LIGHT.

**CROWN LEVEL.
KING T'CHALLA'S
PENTHOUSE.**

COMMENCE
MEETING. READ
TODAY'S
SCHEDULE.

CURRENT
MEETING ENDS AT
6:45 A.M. AVENGERS
MOUNTAIN TIME.

6:50, FINISH
REVIEWING ALL
GLOBAL COMBAT
SURVEILLANCE
FOOTAGE MARKED
"AVENGERS VS.
KING IN
BLACK."

ALREADY
DONE.

EMAIL
POST-FIGHT
PERFORMANCE
GRADES TO EACH
AVENGER, INCLUDING
NOTES ON
DEFICIENCIES AND
SUGGESTED POINTS
OF TRAINING
EMPHASIS.

INCLUDING
YOUR OWN
DEFICIENCIES?

OF
COURSE.

IF
THERE ARE
ANY.



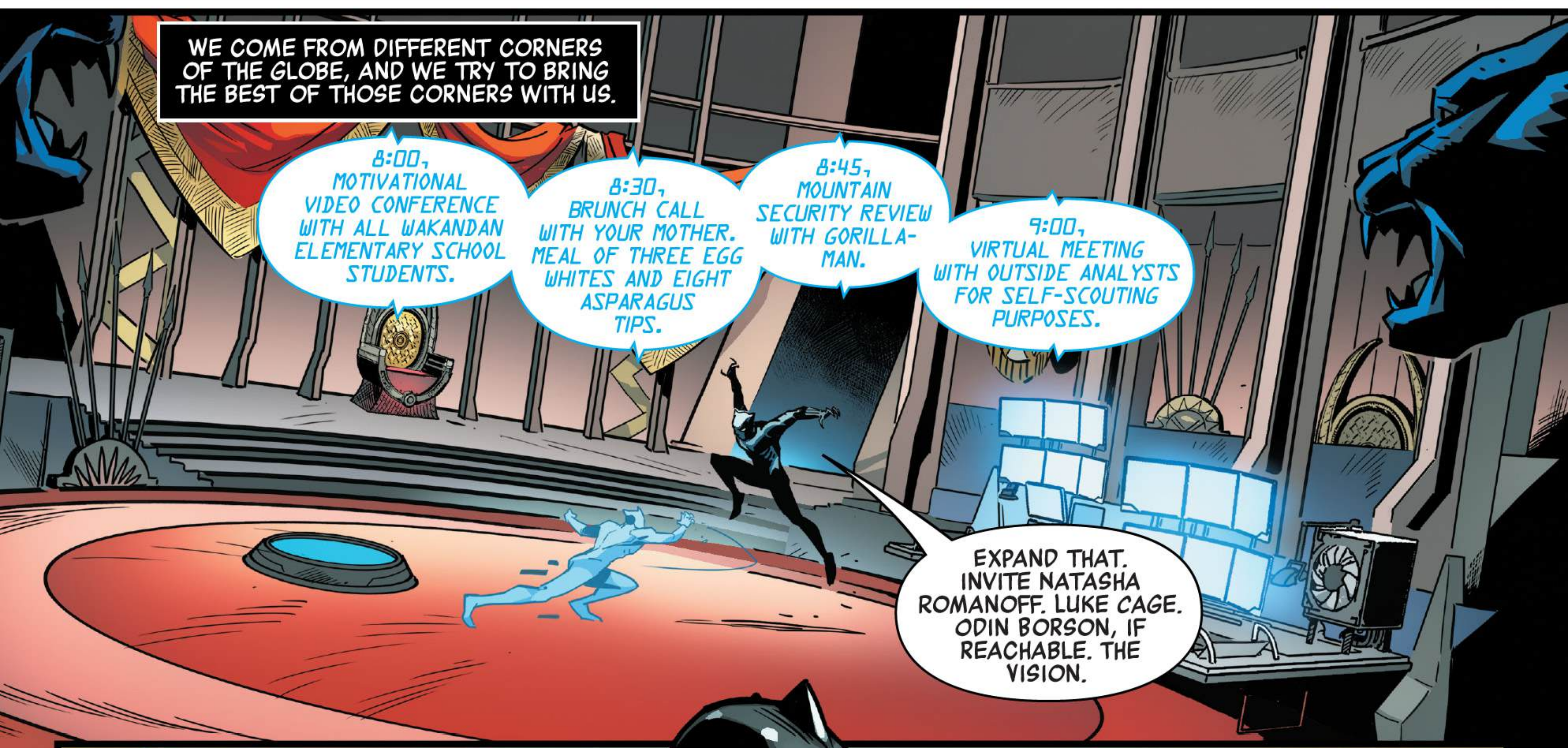
BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE EXIST ABOVE THE WORLD. EVEN AS WE'RE LITERALLY EXISTING ABOVE THE WORLD.

REPLACE WITH ANTI-MIND-CONTROL MENTAL SELF-DEFENSE REFRESHER. MANDATORY FOR ALL TEAM MEMBERS.

YES, THAT MEANS TONY TOO.

7:15, DIPLOMATIC MEETING WITH THE ATLANTIAN AMBASSADOR TO--

RESCHEDULE.



WE COME FROM DIFFERENT CORNERS OF THE GLOBE, AND WE TRY TO BRING THE BEST OF THOSE CORNERS WITH US.

8:00, MOTIVATIONAL VIDEO CONFERENCE WITH ALL WAKANDAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS.

8:30, BRUNCH CALL WITH YOUR MOTHER. MEAL OF THREE EGG WHITES AND EIGHT ASPARAGUS TIPS.

8:45, MOUNTAIN SECURITY REVIEW WITH GORILLA-MAN.

9:00, VIRTUAL MEETING WITH OUTSIDE ANALYSTS FOR SELF-SCOUTING PURPOSES.

EXPAND THAT. INVITE NATASHA ROMANOFF. LUKE CAGE. ODIN BORSON, IF REACHABLE. THE VISION.



THE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES.

9:30, CONTINUE HEALTH SCANS OF MAYA LOPEZ.

10:15, INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING WITH OKOYE AND THE AGENTS OF WAKANDA.

10:30, BOARD QUINJET, UNDERGO HYPERBARIC OXYGEN CHAMBER THERAPY WHILE IN FLIGHT.

11:45, ATTEND MEETING WITH NINE-YEAR-OLD CANCER PATIENT AT SAINT JUDE'S MEDICAL CENTER.

NNGH.



I REVIEWED THE CHILD'S MEDICAL RECORDS THIS MORNING. CANCEL THE THERAPY. MOVE BACK THE MEETINGS. I'LL TELEPORT TO THE HOSPITAL EARLY.

IS THAT A WISE DECISION?

THE
LEGACIES.

ARE YOU
GOVERNING WITH
YOUR HEAD?

AND THE LESSONS
WE LEARN FROM
THOSE WHO'VE
BEEN CALLED TO
SERVE BEFORE US.

OR
WITH YOUR
HEART?

A BIT OF
BOTH, FATHER.
JUST AS YOU
TAUGHT ME.

HERE IN OUR BUBBLE,
WE HAVE ONE JOB
AND ONE JOB ONLY.

WELL
DONE, MY
SON.

MY
KING.

TO WORK LIKE IT'S THE
LAST DAY WE'LL EVER
HAVE ON THIS EARTH.

HARD-LIGHT
HOLOGRAM
DEACTIVATING.

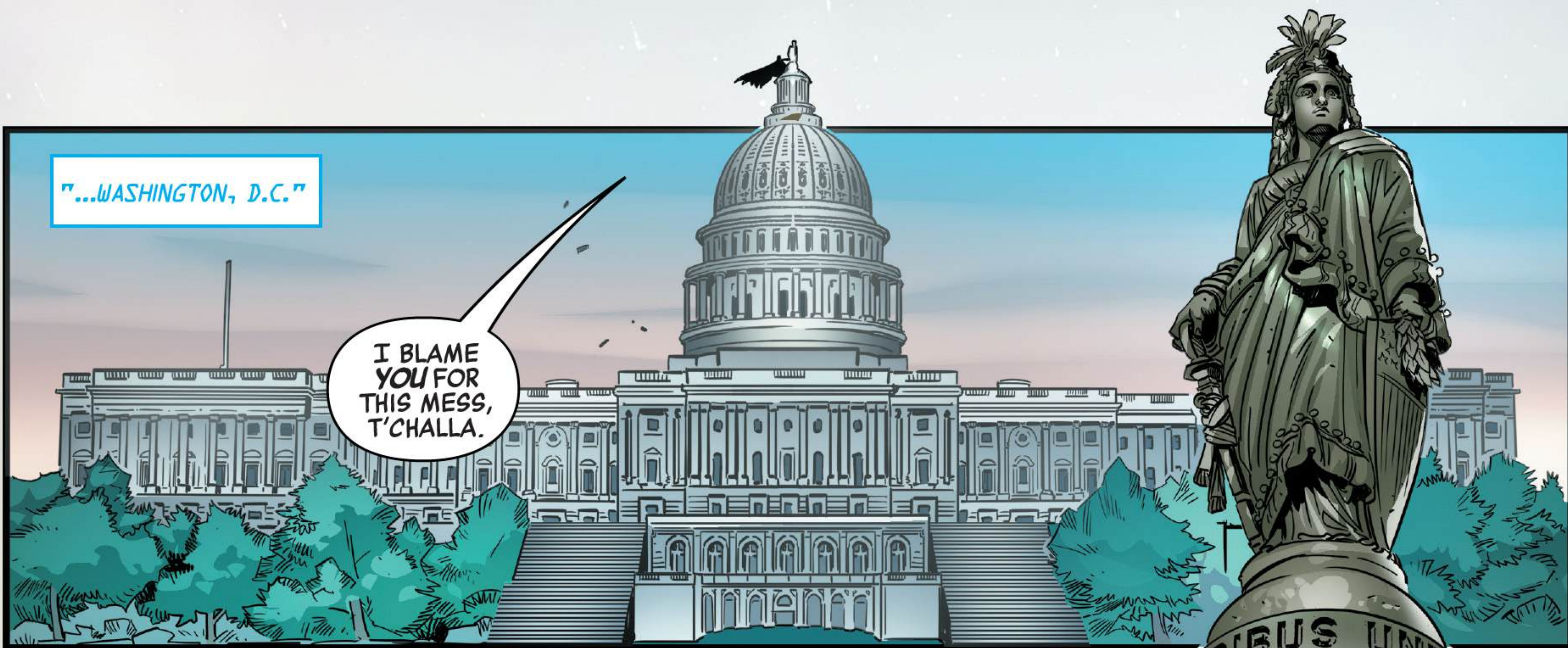
YOU'VE FINISHED
SPARRING THREE
MINUTES EARLY. WOULD
YOU LIKE TO COMPLETE
YOUR 200 PUSHUPS
FOR THE DAY?

LATER.

BECAUSE WHEN YOU'RE
AN AVENGER, YOU BETTER
BELIEVE THAT SOMEONE
SOMEWHERE IS PLANNING TO
MAKE IT **EXACTLY** THAT.

I HAVE A
FEELING I'M
ABOUT TO
RECEIVE A PHONE
CALL.

INCOMING
CALL FROM...

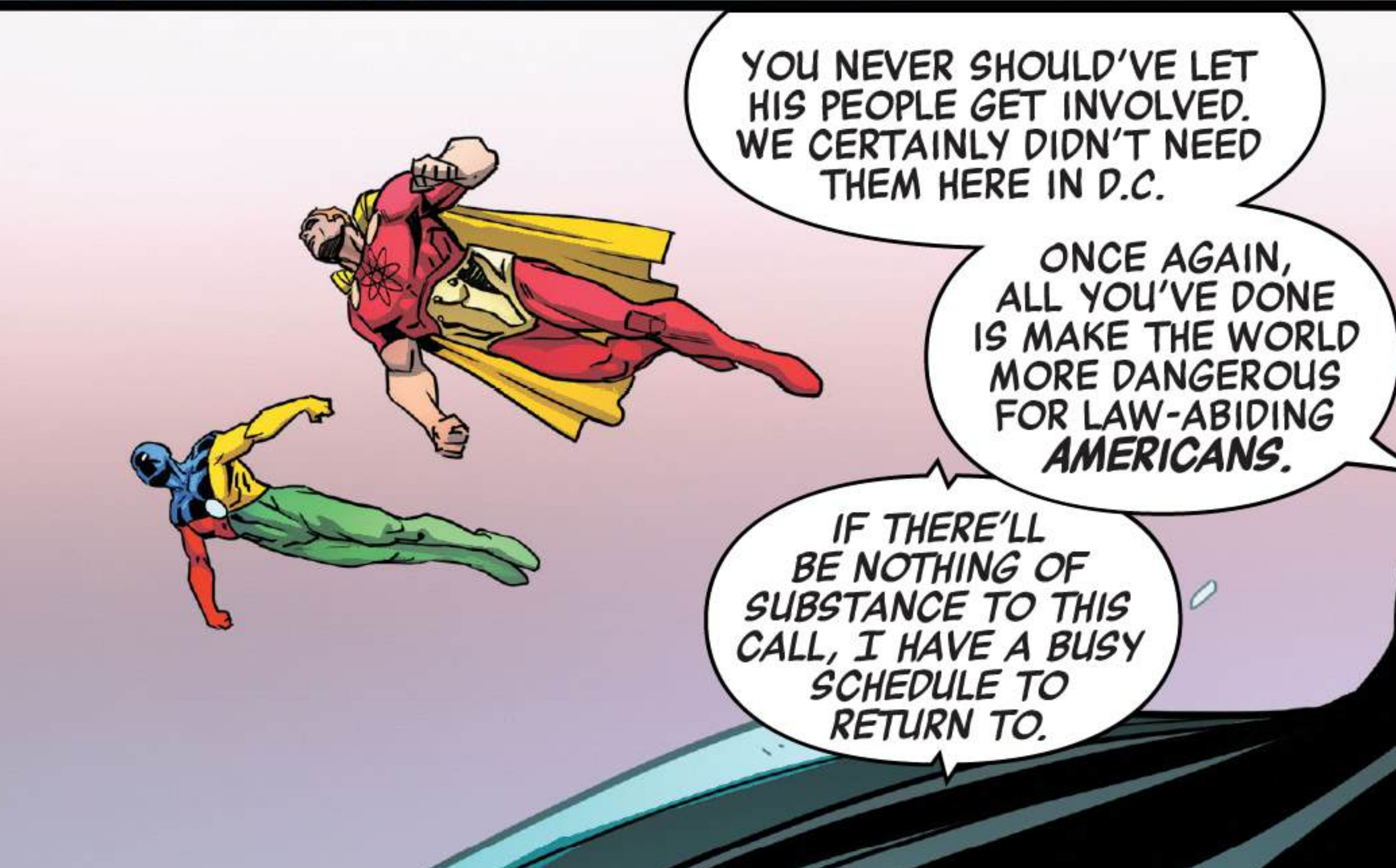


I BLAME YOU FOR THIS MESS, T'CHALLA.

IT'S YOUR FAULT THE WORLD'S GREATEST **MASS MURDERER** FELL INTO THE HANDS OF THE **RUSSIANS** AND ENDED UP WHERE HE DID. NOW THIS FRESH NEW **MADNESS** OF HIS IS ON YOUR HEAD.

CONGRESSMAN RICHMOND. YOU'LL FORGIVE ME IF I'VE BEEN A BIT BUSY DEFEATING A GOD.

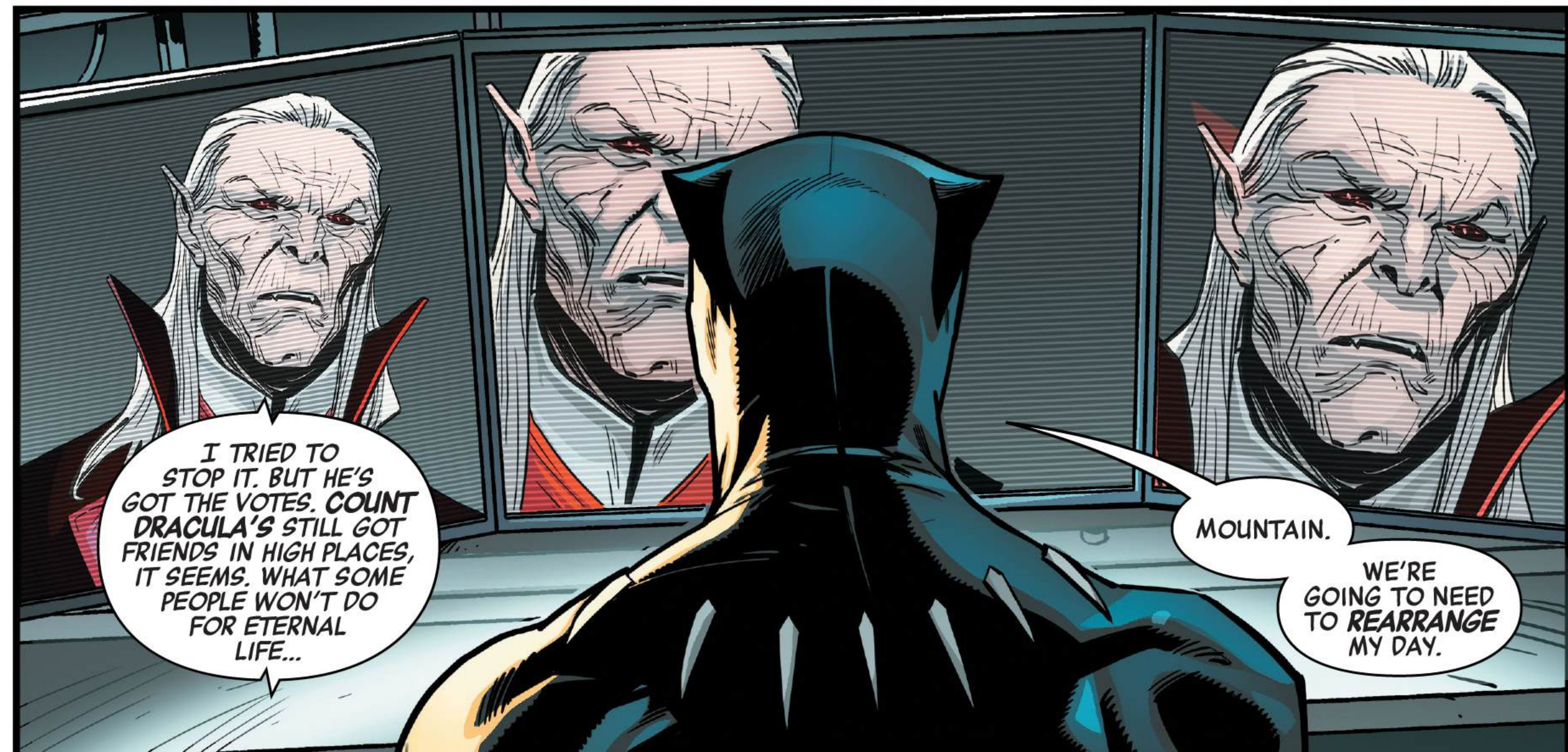
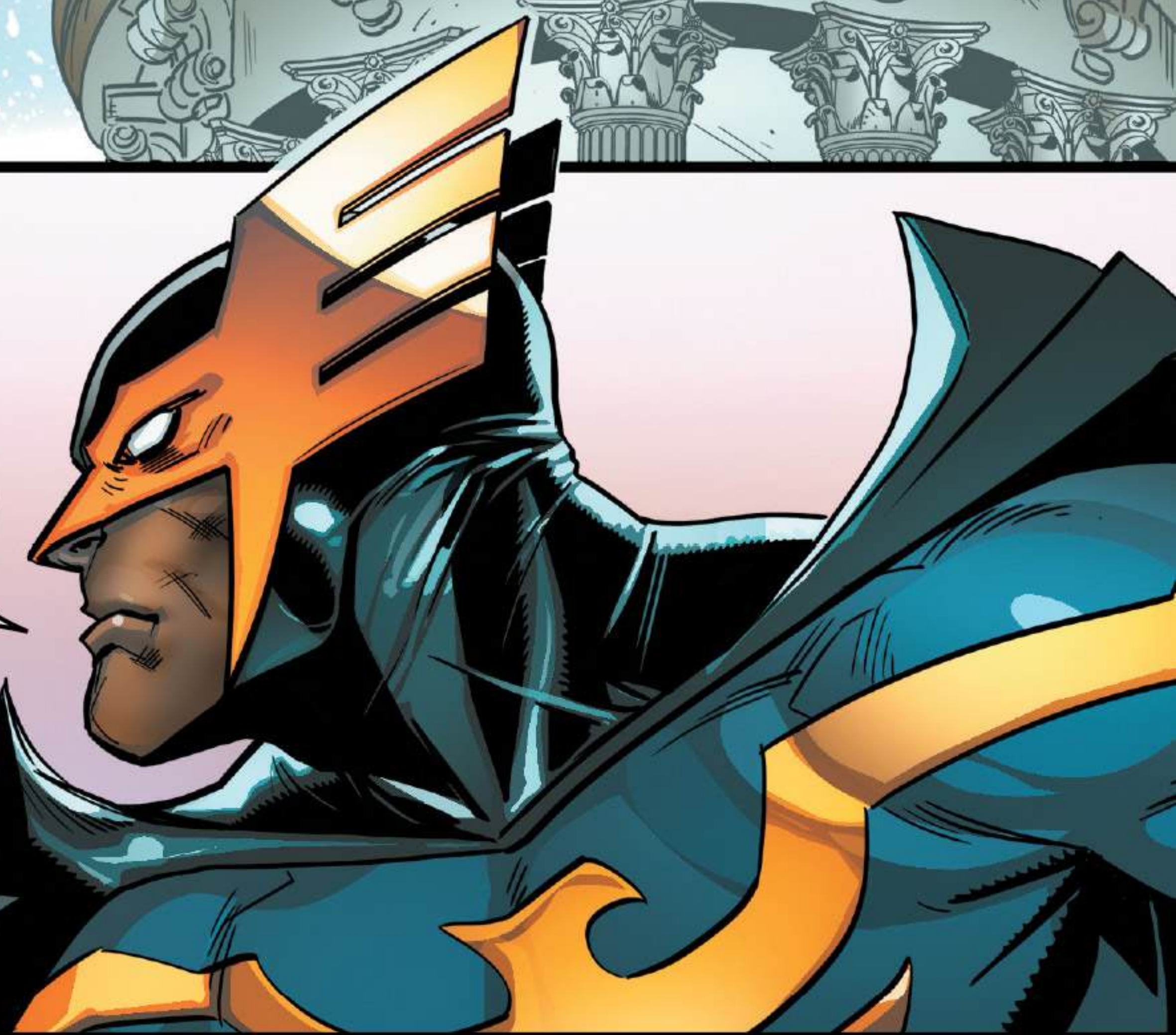
YEAH, THAT PART'S ALL YOUR FAULT TOO.



YOU NEVER SHOULD'VE LET HIS PEOPLE GET INVOLVED. WE CERTAINLY DIDN'T NEED THEM HERE IN D.C.

ONCE AGAIN, ALL YOU'VE DONE IS MAKE THE WORLD MORE DANGEROUS FOR LAW-ABIDING AMERICANS.

IF THERE'LL BE NOTHING OF SUBSTANCE TO THIS CALL, I HAVE A BUSY SCHEDULE TO RETURN TO.



I TRIED TO STOP IT. BUT HE'S GOT THE VOTES. COUNT DRACULA'S STILL GOT FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES, IT SEEMS. WHAT SOME PEOPLE WON'T DO FOR ETERNAL LIFE...

MOUNTAIN.

WE'RE GOING TO NEED TO REARRANGE MY DAY.

CHERNOBYL

WE
FOUGHT FOR
YOU.

WHEN THE
DARKEST OF NIGHTS
CAME OVER THE WORLD
AND EVERYTHING YOU LOVE
WAS IMPERILED BY THIS...
SO-CALLED **KING IN
BLACK**...

...MY PEOPLE
STOOD BY YOUR
SIDE ON THE
BATTLEFIELD.

WE DID
THIS...DESPITE
YOUR LONG HISTORY
OF **PERSECUTION**
WHEN IT COMES
TO OUR KIND.

I HAVE
HEARD THE
SAME **LIES** FOR
CENTURIES.

IN THE SAME
WAY YOU HAVE LONG
SLANDERED MUTANTS AS
SAVAGES AND SUBHUMANS,
SO HAVE YOU SOUGHT TO
TARNISH **COUNT
DRACULA** AND HIS
CHILDREN.

INSTEAD OF
BEING LOOKED UPON
WITH SYMPATHY AS THE
UNIQUELY CHALLENGED
VICTIMS OF **IMMUNE
DEFICIENCY** THAT WE ARE,
MY PEOPLE AND I ARE
LABELED **MONSTERS**.

JUST AS
YOUR SCIENCE AND
CHURCHES ONCE DEMONIZED
THOSE WITH COMMON BIRTH
DEFECTS OR MENTAL
ILLNESS.

AND YET, WE
STILL VALIANTLY RISKED
OUR LIVES TO **FIGHT** FOR
YOU. THE VERY SAME NATIONS
WHO HAVE **HUNTED** US
AND DENIED US
HAVEN.

AND
TOGETHER...
WE WON.

AND WHAT
DID MY PEOPLE
RECEIVE IN **RETURN**
FOR THEIR PIVOTAL
ROLE IN THIS
VICTORY?

THEY WERE
SLAUGHTERED
WHERE THEY STOOD
BEFORE THE DUST HAD
EVEN SETTLED.
BETRAYED BY ONE
WHO FOUGHT BY
THEIR SIDE.*

THE AVENGER
KNOWN AS **BLADE**.
A NOTORIOUS BUTCHER
OF MY PEOPLE, WHO
HAS REPEATEDLY
VOWED **GENOCIDE**
AGAINST US.

I ASK YOU...
IS **THIS** THE WORLD
WE FOUGHT TO
SAVE FROM
KNULL?

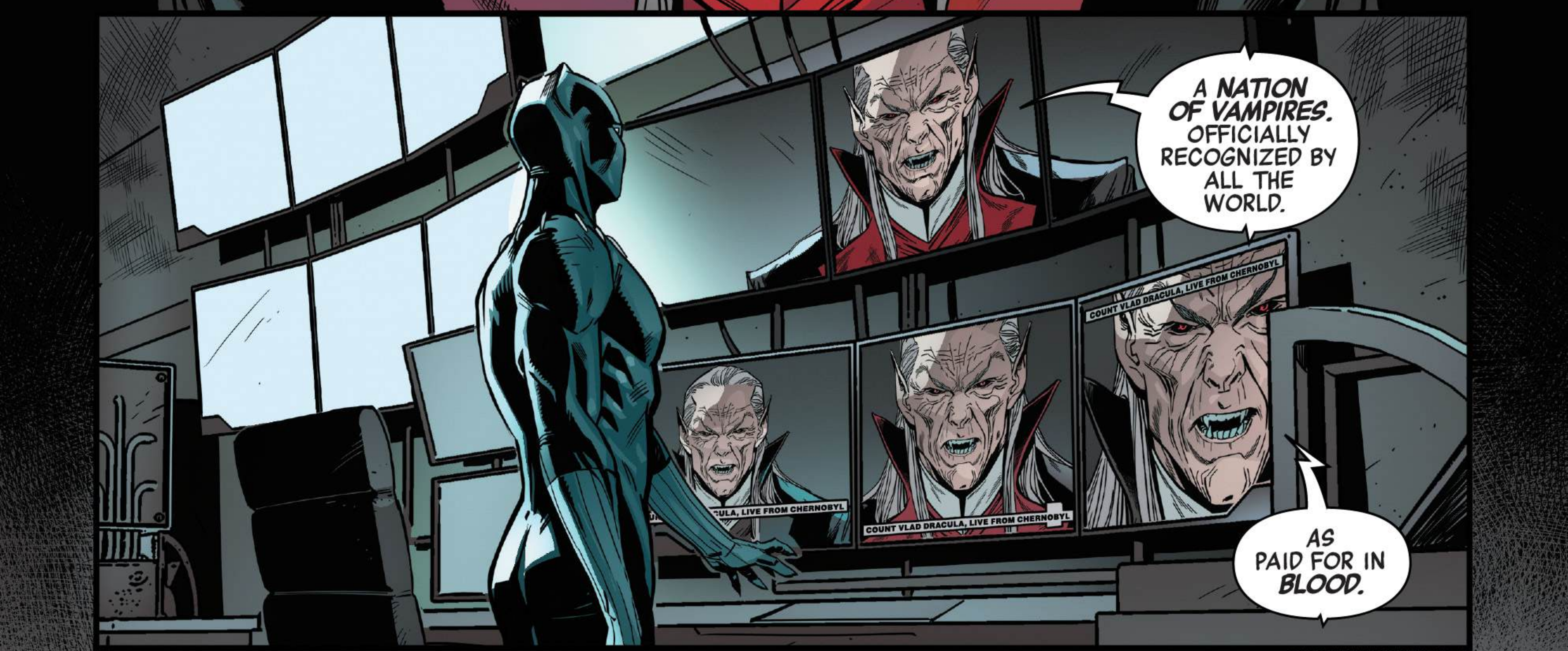


REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE MIGHTIEST
NATIONS OF THE EARTH,
HEAR ME NOW.

THIS IS A
TIME FOR **REBUILDING**.
A TIME TO HONOR ALL
THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR
LIVES IN THIS GREAT WAR
AGAINST THE **FASCISM**
OF DARK GODS.

ALL MY
PEOPLE ASK FOR
NOW IS THE CHANCE
TO ENJOY THAT VERY
FREEDOM THEY FOUGHT
SO VALIANTLY TO
PRESERVE.

WE WANT
A COUNTRY OF
OUR OWN. HERE IN
THIS LAND WE HAVE
RECLAIMED FROM
RADIOACTIVE
RUIN.



A NATION
OF **VAMPIRES**.
OFFICIALLY
RECOGNIZED BY
ALL THE
WORLD.

AS
PAID FOR IN
BLOOD.

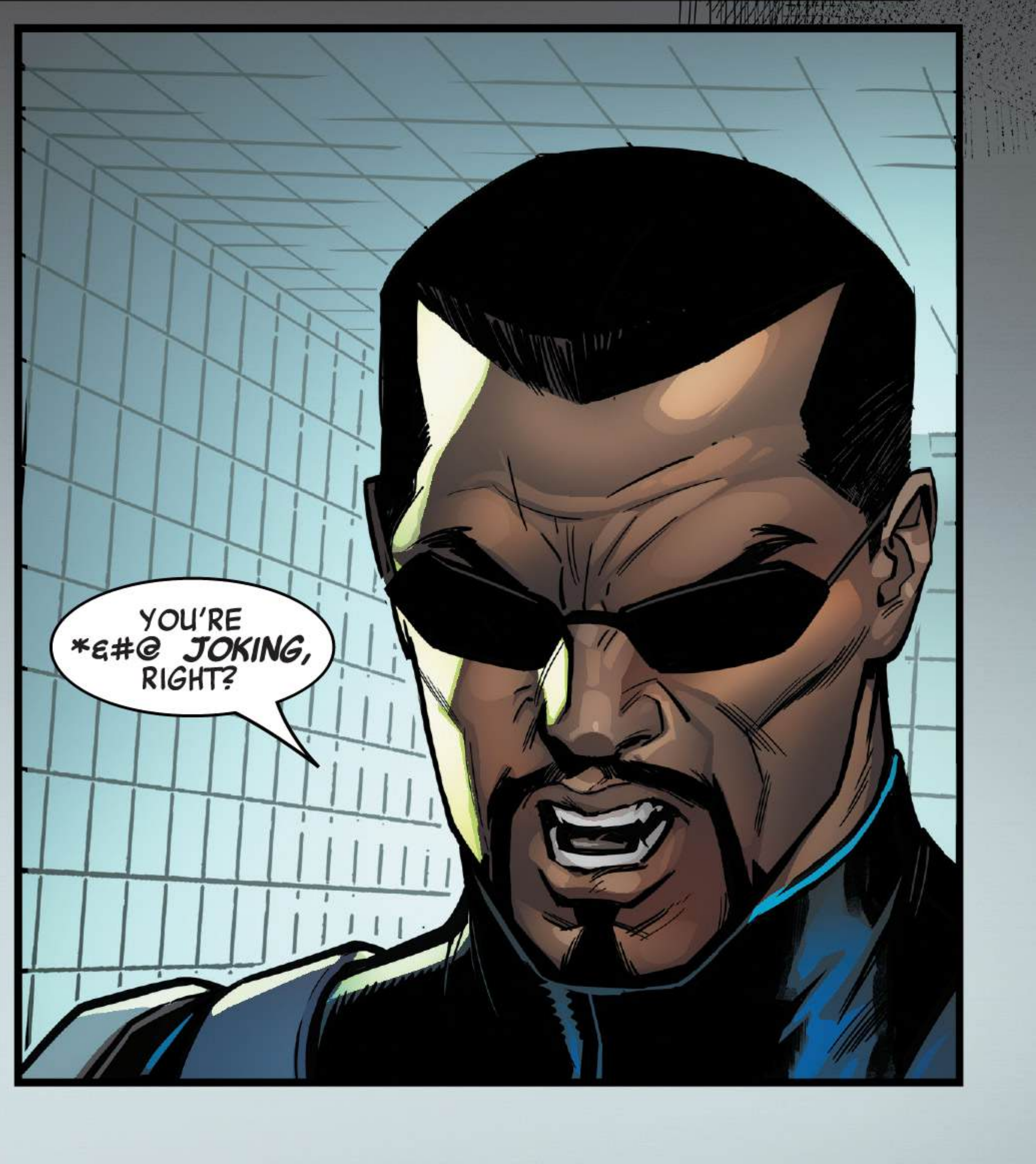


YOU'RE
IN CONGRESS,
RICHMOND. YOU
SHOULD'VE
STOPPED
THIS.

PRETTY SURE
THIS WAS DRACULA'S
PLAN ALL ALONG. NO
OTHER REASON HE
WOULD'VE TRUSTED HIS
WARRIORS' LIVES
TO BLADE.

HE WANTED
SOVEREIGNTY.
AND HE'S GOING
TO GET IT.

AND YOU'LL
LIKE THIS PART
EVEN BETTER, T'CHALLA.
THE BLOODSUCKER'S
GOT A COUPLE OF
OTHER DEMANDS
AS WELL.



YOU'RE
*ε#@ JOKING,
RIGHT?



I'M AFRAID NOT. HE'S DEMANDING A SEAT ON THE U.N. COUNCIL FOR HIS SON, XARUS, THE *SHADOW COLONEL*.

THE ONE WHOSE *HEAD* I CUT OFF?

BLOOD DELIVERIES FROM THE RED CROSS TO FEED HIS STARVING PEOPLE. AND THE RELEASE OF ALL VAMPIRIC "*POLITICAL PRISONERS*."

INCLUDING THE DEMONIC *HELLHOUND* WE'VE HAD LOCKED IN OUR BRIG SINCE OUR ENCOUNTER WITH HIS *LEGION OF THE UNLIVING*.

WITHERED OLD FANGER PLAYED US.



THEY AIDED THE WORLD IN THE FIGHT AGAINST KNULL. YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE KILLED THEM.

THEY'RE *VAMPIRES!*

IF ONE FOX KILLS ANOTHER, IT AIN'T BECAUSE IT'S PROTECTING THE HENHOUSE! IT JUST WANTS THE CHICKENS FOR *ITSELF!*



LET THEM HAVE THEIR COUNTRY. AT LEAST I'LL KNOW WHERE THEY'RE AT NEXT TIME I GO TO *KILL 'EM ALL*.

THAT WOULD BE A DECLARATION OF WAR AGAINST AN OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED NATION ON THE PART OF THE AVENGERS.



NO, IT WOULD BE A VAMPIRE HUNTER DOING WHAT I WAS *BORN* TO DO. BUT LET ME CLEAR UP ANY TROUBLES FOR YOU AND YOUR PRETTY AVENGERS, CHIEF.

I QUIT.

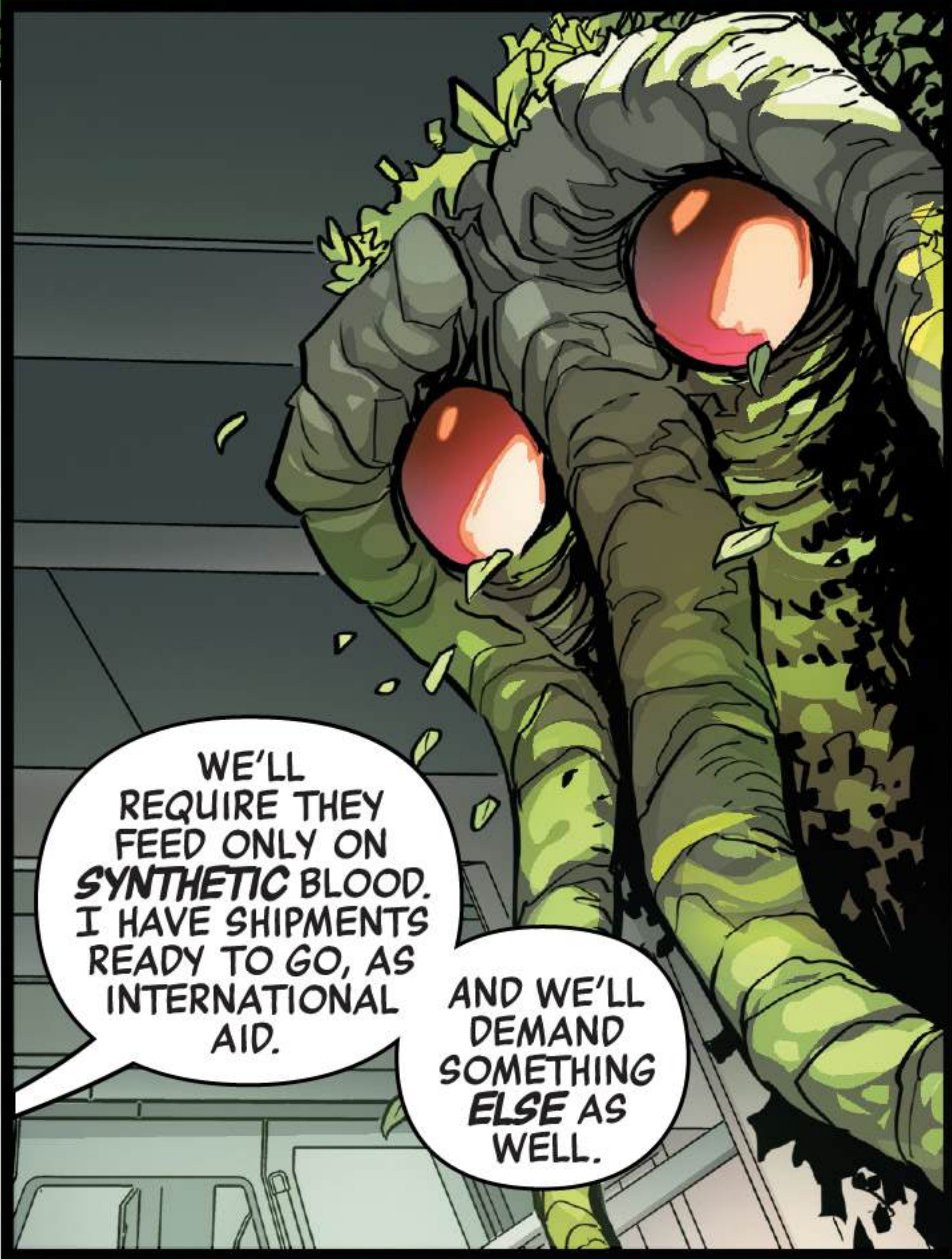


THERE'S ANOTHER **OPTION** HERE.

AIN'T FILING MY FANGS OFF FOR NOBODY.

LOOK AFTER YOURSELF, **BOY-THING.**

DRACULA'S DEMANDS WILL BE MET. BUT AS KING OF WAKANDA, THERE'S THE CHANCE I COULD MAKE A FEW OF MY OWN.



WE'LL REQUIRE THEY FEED ONLY ON **SYNTHETIC BLOOD.** I HAVE SHIPMENTS READY TO GO, AS INTERNATIONAL AID.

AND WE'LL DEMAND SOMETHING **ELSE** AS WELL.

WHICH WOULD BE **WHAT,** EXACTLY?

IT WOULDN'T REQUIRE YOU TO LEAVE THE AVENGERS. NOT PERMANENTLY AT LEAST. WE'RE GOING TO NEED YOU.

AND I CAN SEE IT IN YOU, ERIC...



...YOU NEED THIS TOO.

I KNOW HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO YOU THAT YOU'RE HERE. YOU SHOW THE WORLD, YOU SHOW YOUR OWN PEOPLE...

...THEY DON'T HAVE TO BE LIKE DRACULA.



THEY CAN BE LIKE YOU.

THEY CAN BE A **HERO.**

WHAT THE HELL'S THE DEMAND?



UM,
HELLO?



ECHO, RIGHT?
OR SHOULD I...
CALL YOU
PHOENIX?

BEST STICK
TO ECHO. OR
MAYA.

THE BLACK
PANTHER'S TESTING
WILL DECIDE IF I'M
TO CONTINUE TO BE
THE PHOENIX OR NOT.

PRETTY
SURE *YOU*
GET TO DECIDE
THAT.

THOUGHT
YOU MIGHT
BE GETTING
HUNGRY.

I KNOW
T'CHALLA
SOMETIMES
FORGETS
THAT THE
REST OF US
NEED TO
EAT.



THANK YOU.
WE'RE ON
BREAK. BUT I
DIDN'T WANT
TO WANDER
FAR.

I KNOW.
I STILL GET
LOST IN THIS
PLACE.

IT'S NOT
THAT.

EVERYONE
HERE... IS
AFRAID OF
ME.

EVEN
THE **BLACK
PANTHER**.

THOR
WON'T
EVEN LOOK
AT ME.



AND I CAN
UNDERSTAND WHY.
I KNOW WHAT THE
PHOENIX HAS DONE
IN THE PAST. THE
WORLDS THAT
HAVE FALLEN.

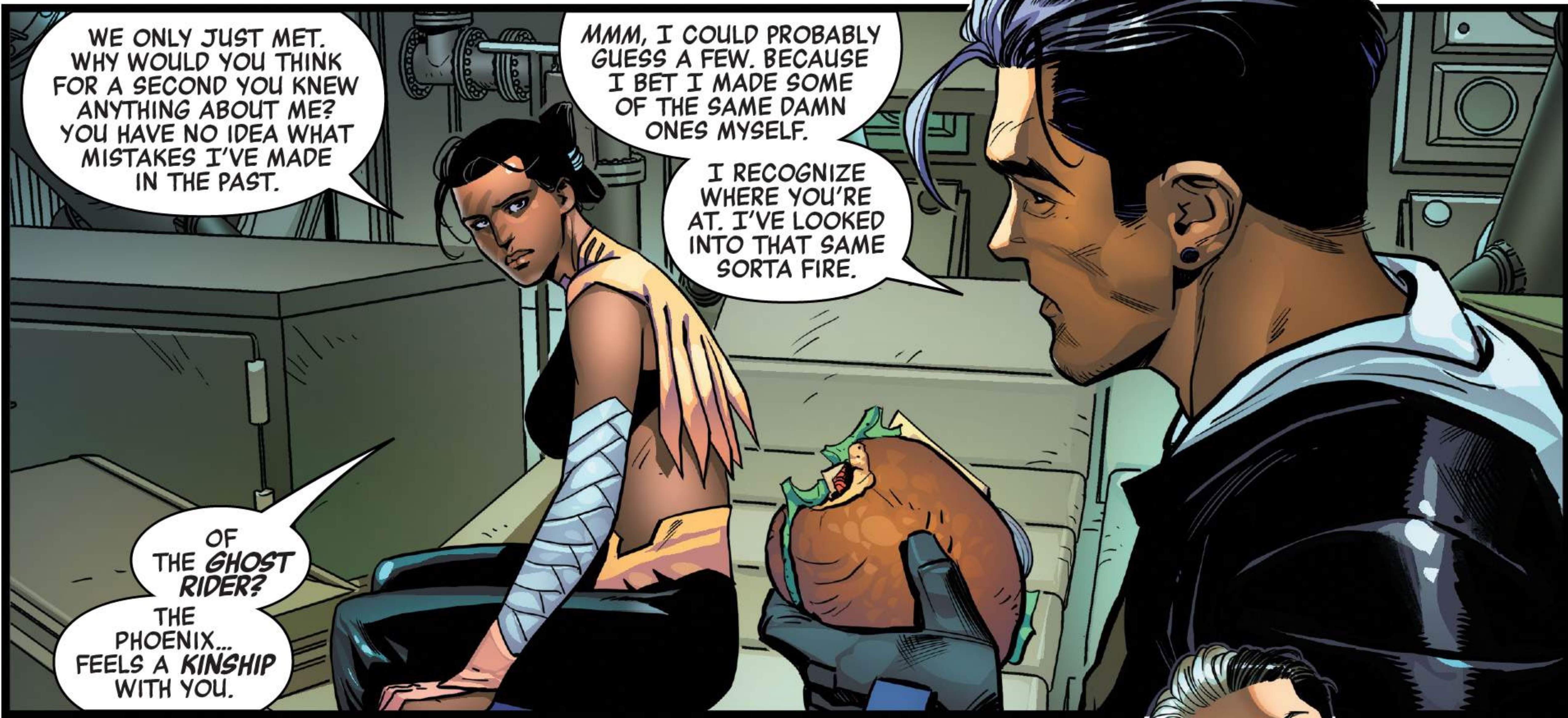
IT
SHOWS ME
IN THE FIRE.
EVERY TIME I
CLOSE MY
EYES.

I'VE
DECIDED
IT MIGHT BE
WISE IF I DIDN'T
SLEEP ANYMORE.

COOL.
I'M A NIGHT
OWL TOO.

ROBERTO REYES.
YOU'RE THE ONLY
AVENGER WHO ISN'T
FRIGHTENED BY ME.
WHY IS THAT?

BECAUSE
I KNOW THAT
WHAT YOU SEE IN
THAT FIRE... THAT'S
NOT YOU.



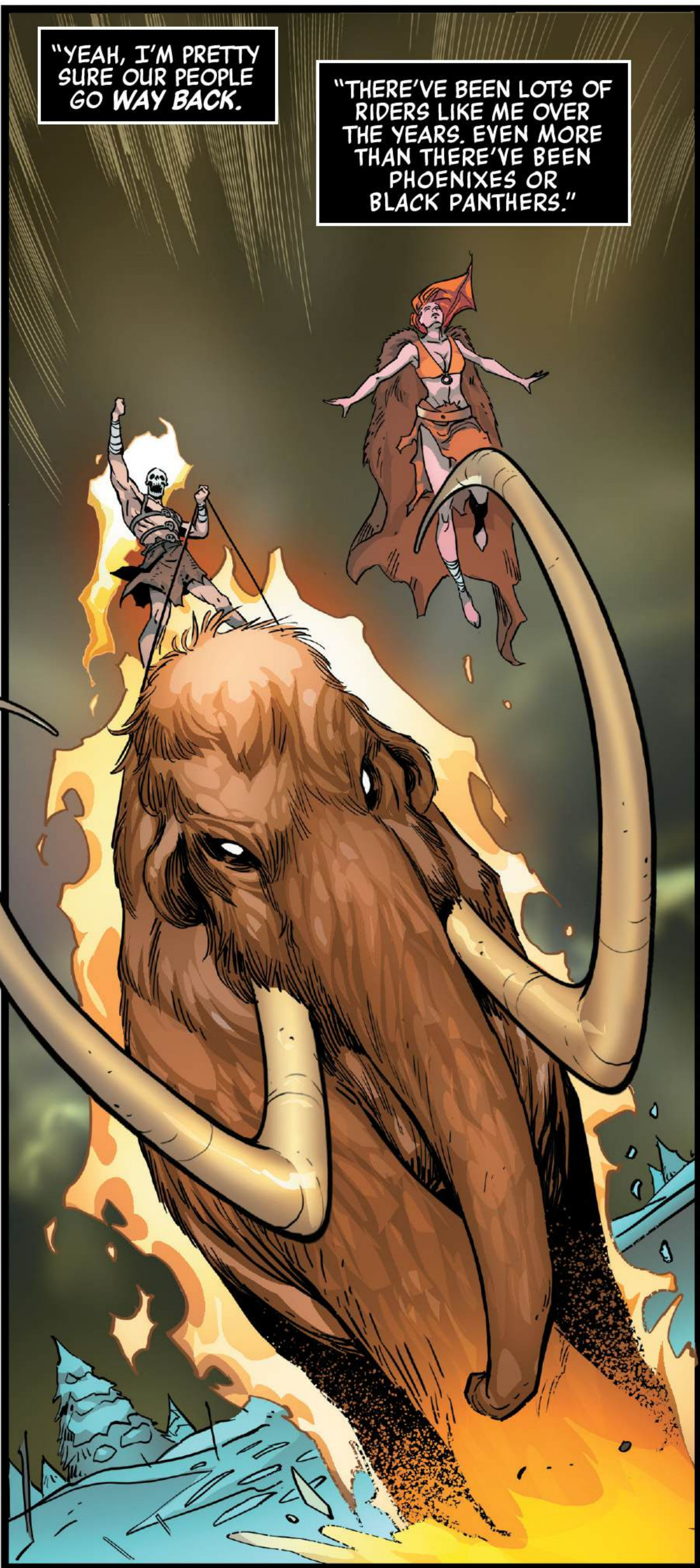
WE ONLY JUST MET. WHY WOULD YOU THINK FOR A SECOND YOU KNEW ANYTHING ABOUT ME? YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT MISTAKES I'VE MADE IN THE PAST.

MMM, I COULD PROBABLY GUESS A FEW. BECAUSE I BET I MADE SOME OF THE SAME DAMN ONES MYSELF.

I RECOGNIZE WHERE YOU'RE AT. I'VE LOOKED INTO THAT SAME SORTA FIRE.

OF THE *GHOST RIDER*?

THE PHOENIX... FEELS A *KINSHIP* WITH YOU.



"YEAH, I'M PRETTY SURE OUR PEOPLE GO WAY BACK."

"THERE'VE BEEN LOTS OF RIDERS LIKE ME OVER THE YEARS. EVEN MORE THAN THERE'VE BEEN PHOENIXES OR BLACK PANTHERS."



WE'RE EITHER THE HAND OF GOD OR A SLAVE TO THE DEVIL. DEPENDS ON WHO YOU ASK. BUT NO MATTER WHAT YOU BELIEVE, ONE THING'S CERTAIN.

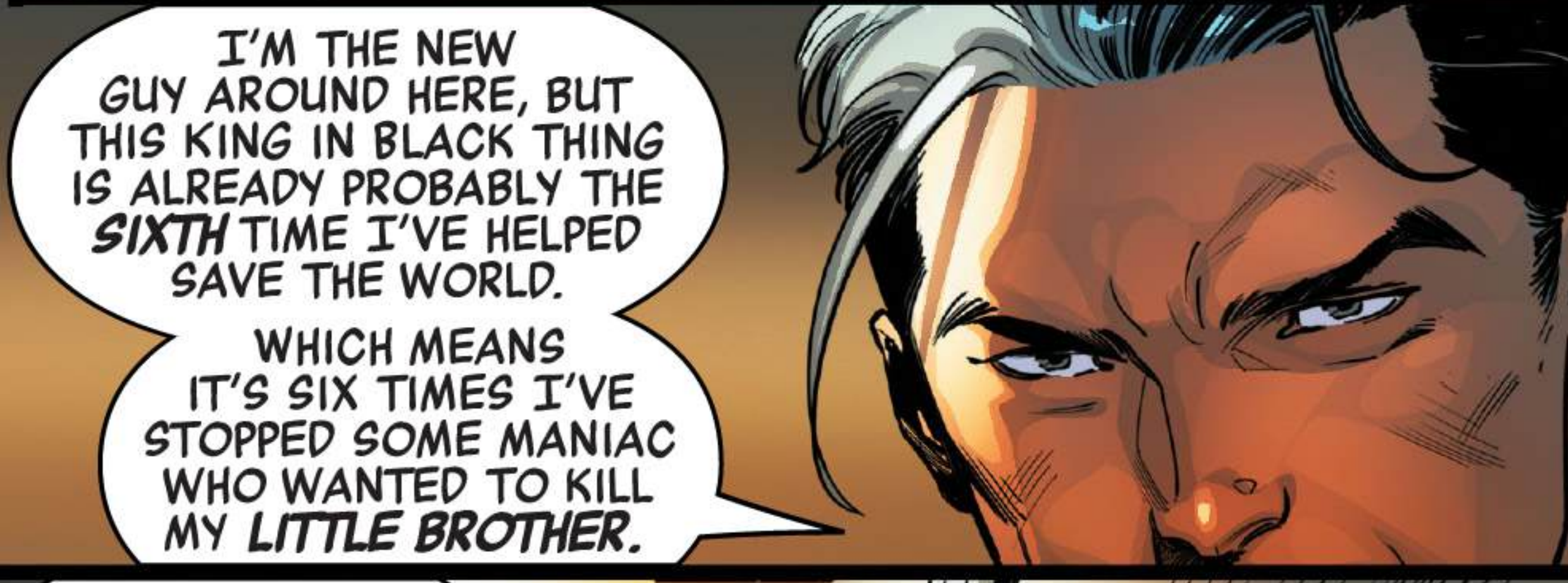
NONE OF US WIND UP HAPPY. OR HEALTHY. OR PARTICULARLY *SANE*.



THE *SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE* IS THE KIND OF POWER THAT RIDES YOU HARD AND PUTS YOU UP WET. WET WITH *GASOLINE*.

DR. STRANGE STILL TELLS ME TO MY FACE HOW *CRAZY* I AM EVERY TIME I SEE HIM.

THEN WHY DO YOU KEEP DOING IT? HOW DO YOU KNOW THE POWER'S WORTH THE RISK?



I'M THE NEW GUY AROUND HERE, BUT THIS KING IN BLACK THING IS ALREADY PROBABLY THE *SIXTH* TIME I'VE HELPED SAVE THE WORLD.

WHICH MEANS IT'S SIX TIMES I'VE STOPPED SOME MANIAC WHO WANTED TO KILL MY *LITTLE BROTHER*.



SO IF I GOTTA MELT MY OWN SKIN OFF NOW AND THEN JUST TO MAKE SURE GABE STAYS SAFE, WELL...I CONSIDER THAT A PRICE WORTH PAYING.

WOULDN'T YOU?

YOU GOT SOMEONE WORTH *BURNING* FOR, MAYA?



MY FATHER.

OR AT LEAST...HIS MEMORY.

AND THE CHANCE TO MAKE UP FOR HIS SINS.

AS WELL AS MY OWN.

CHEERS TO THAT.

HAVE A CHEESEBURGER, PHOENIX.
AND WELCOME TO THE AVENGERS.



UM.

I'M AFRAID I CAN'T READ YOUR LIPS WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE ANY.

OH. SORRY.

BUT YOUR HEART IS CLEAR ENOUGH.

THANK YOU, ROBERTO.

DAYS LATER.

CAN YOU BELIEVE THIS?

UKRAINIAN MILITARY LEFT THEM AT THE BORDER. SEEMS THE WORLD WAS MOVED BY YOUR SPEECH, LORD DRACULA.

AND NOW THEY'RE SENDING US THEIR BLOOD.

FREELY. AS GIFTS, FROM ALL ACROSS THE WORLD.

HMM. RATHER TAKES THE FUN OUT OF IT WHEN THEY JUST *GIVE* IT TO YOU.

FEED IT TO THE STARVING MASSES. TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR LORD'S GENEROSITY.

THE REST OF US WILL SOON BE FEEDING...ON A MUCH SWEETER PRIZE.

MAYBE SOONER THAN YOU THINK, MY LORD. MY *RATS* SAY WE'VE GOT VISITORS.

YES, RAT BOMBER, I SMELL THEM ALREADY.

"THE AVENGERS
ARE HERE."



WELCOME TO
THE VAMPIRE NATION.
I SEE YOU'VE RETURNED
THE MUTT WE'D
MISPLACED.

YEAH, GOOD
TO SEE YOU
TOO, BOSS.

I WASN'T
REFERRING TO
YOU, SERGEANT.





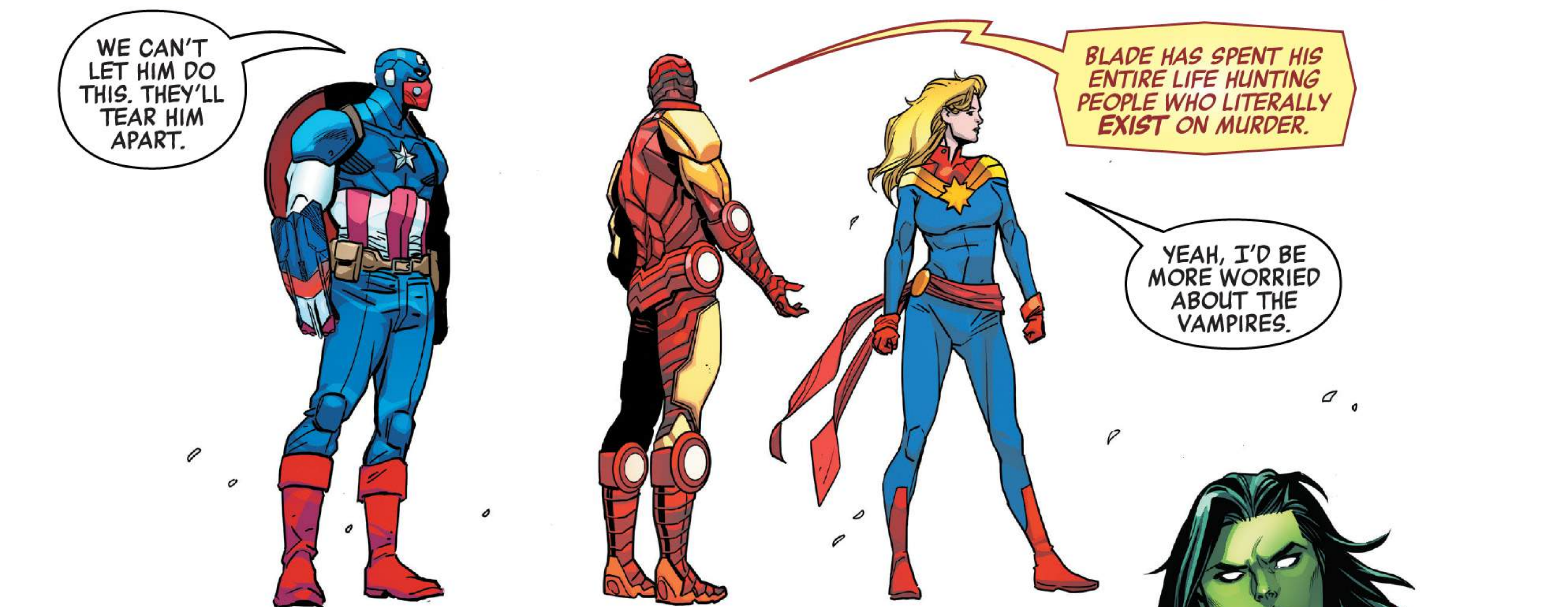
THE BORDER
GUARDS WILL TAKE
POSSESSION OF THE
PRISONER.

SO THAT
BLADE CAN
FACE VAMPIRE
JUSTICE.

YEAH,
THAT'S NOT
EXACTLY WHY
WE'RE HERE,
COUNT.

THE U.N.
HAS APPROVED
YOUR REQUEST FOR
SOVEREIGNTY.

WITH A FEW
CONDITIONS.



WE CAN'T
LET HIM DO
THIS. THEY'LL
TEAR HIM
APART.

**BLADE HAS SPENT HIS
ENTIRE LIFE HUNTING
PEOPLE WHO LITERALLY
EXIST ON MURDER.**

YEAH, I'D BE
MORE WORRIED
ABOUT THE
VAMPIRES.



THAT...IS
ONE **HELL** OF
AN AVENGER.

AYE.

RRGH.

IT'S AN IMPORTANT DAY FOR ANYBODY
WHO JOINS THIS CLUB. THE DAY YOU FIRST
FIGURE OUT THAT THERE ARE PEOPLE ALL
OVER THE UNIVERSE WHO **DESPISE** YOU.

PEOPLE WHO'VE NEVER MET YOU BUT WANT MORE THAN ANYTHING TO SEE YOU *DEAD*.

I REJECT YOUR CONDITIONS. THIS IS *MY* COUNTRY. CROSS THAT BORDER AND YOU ARE SUBJECT TO DRACULA'S WILL.



YOU CAN EITHER LET THAT KEEP YOU UP AT NIGHT, WORRIED ABOUT THE NEXT KING IN BLACK...

WAKANDA DOES NOT SEE IT THAT WAY. AND THE REST OF THE WORLD AGREES.

IF YOU WISH TO JOIN THE LEAGUE OF CIVILIZED NATIONS, YOU WILL NEED TO RESPECT THE RULE OF *LAW AND ORDER*.

LAW AND ORDER? WHAT THE DEVIL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

...OR YOU CAN STICK TO THE PROCESS. CONTROL WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL.

HE'S TALKING ABOUT *ME*.

SO YOU GOT YOUR OWN SUCKHEAD NATION. CONGRATULATIONS. NOW GUESS WHAT COMES WITH IT?

YOU WAKE UP AT DUSK, WHO YOU THINK'S GONNA BE THE FIRST FACE YOU SEE?

AND THE LAST ONE STANDING OVER YOU EACH SUNRISE WHEN YOU CLOSE THE LID OF THAT COFFIN?

YOUR PEOPLE GET OUTTA LINE, THEY'LL ANSWER TO A MAN WHO CARRIES THE FULL AUTHORITY OF THE AVENGERS *AND* THE UNITED NATIONS.

ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR DAYWALKER MIND?

NO, VLAD, OLD BUDDY, WHAT I AM...



...IS THE
SHERIFF
OF VAMPIRE
TOWN.

BUT
YOU CAN
CALL ME
BLADE.

"MR.
BLADE,
SIR."

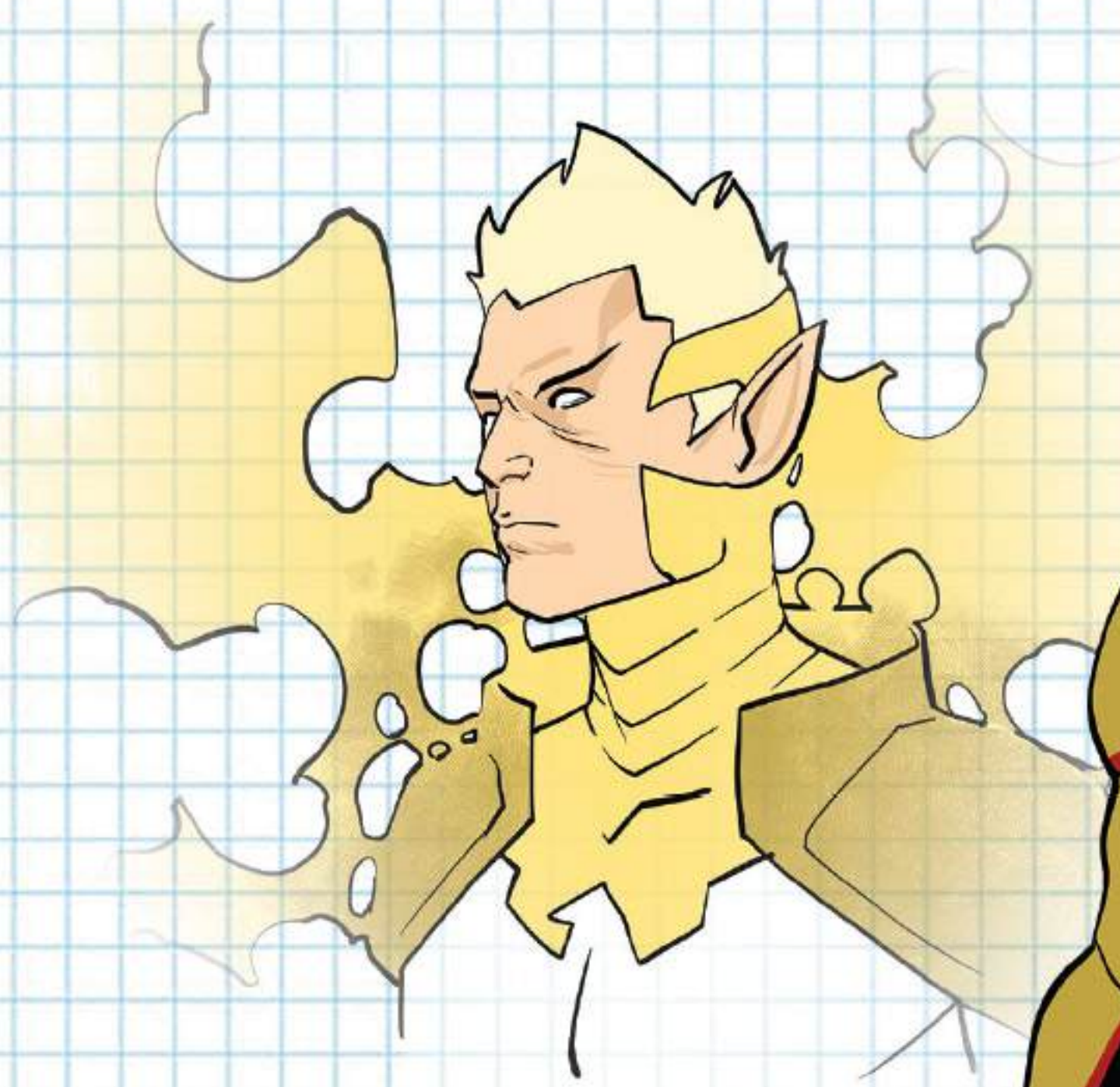
AND WHETHER IT'S
YOUR LAST NIGHT
ON EARTH OR NOT...

...YOU LEAVE
IT ALL ON
THE FIELD.

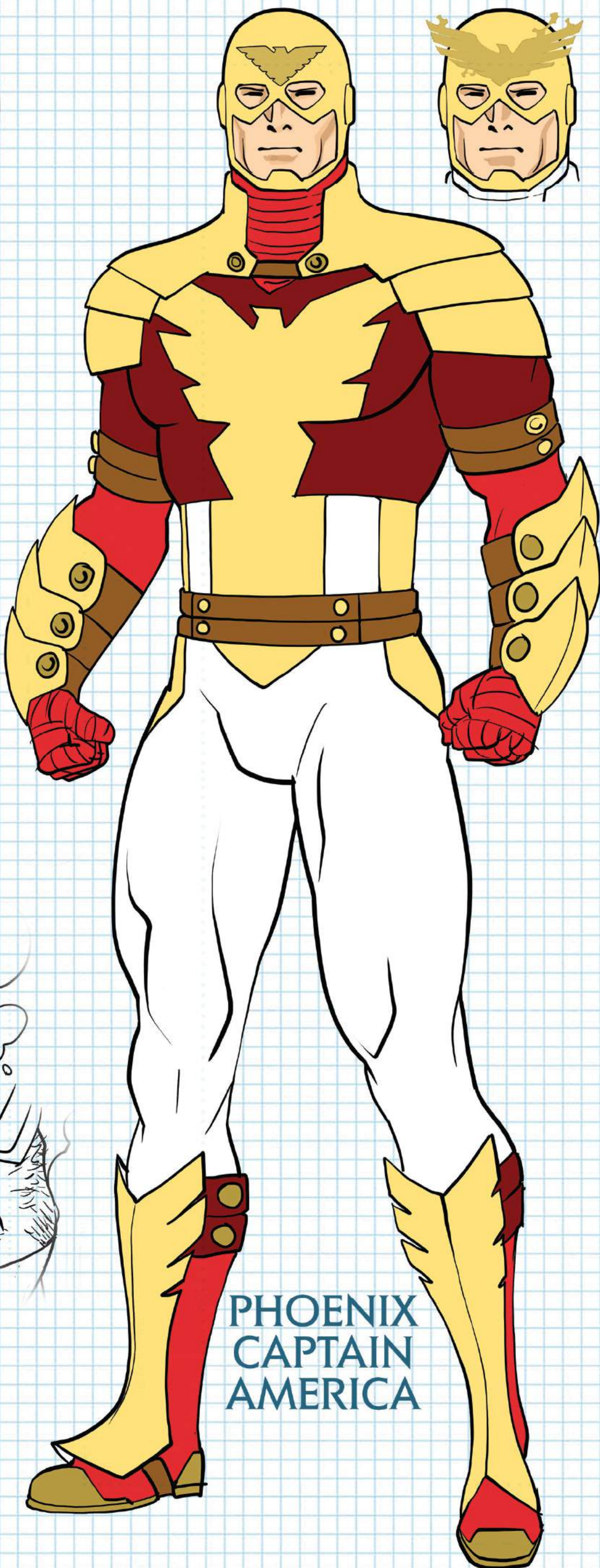
AND COUNT
YOURSELF
LUCKY IF YOU GET
TO GET UP THE
NEXT MORNING...

...AND DO
IT **ALL OVER**
AGAIN.

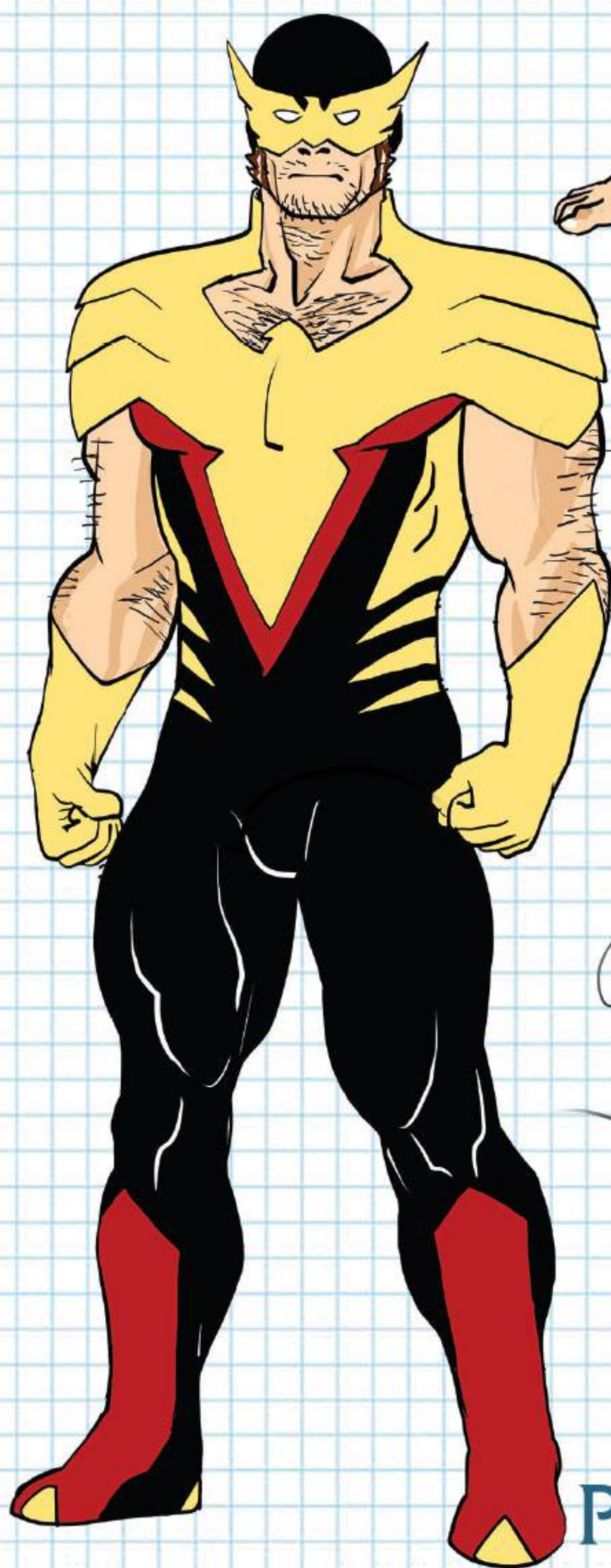




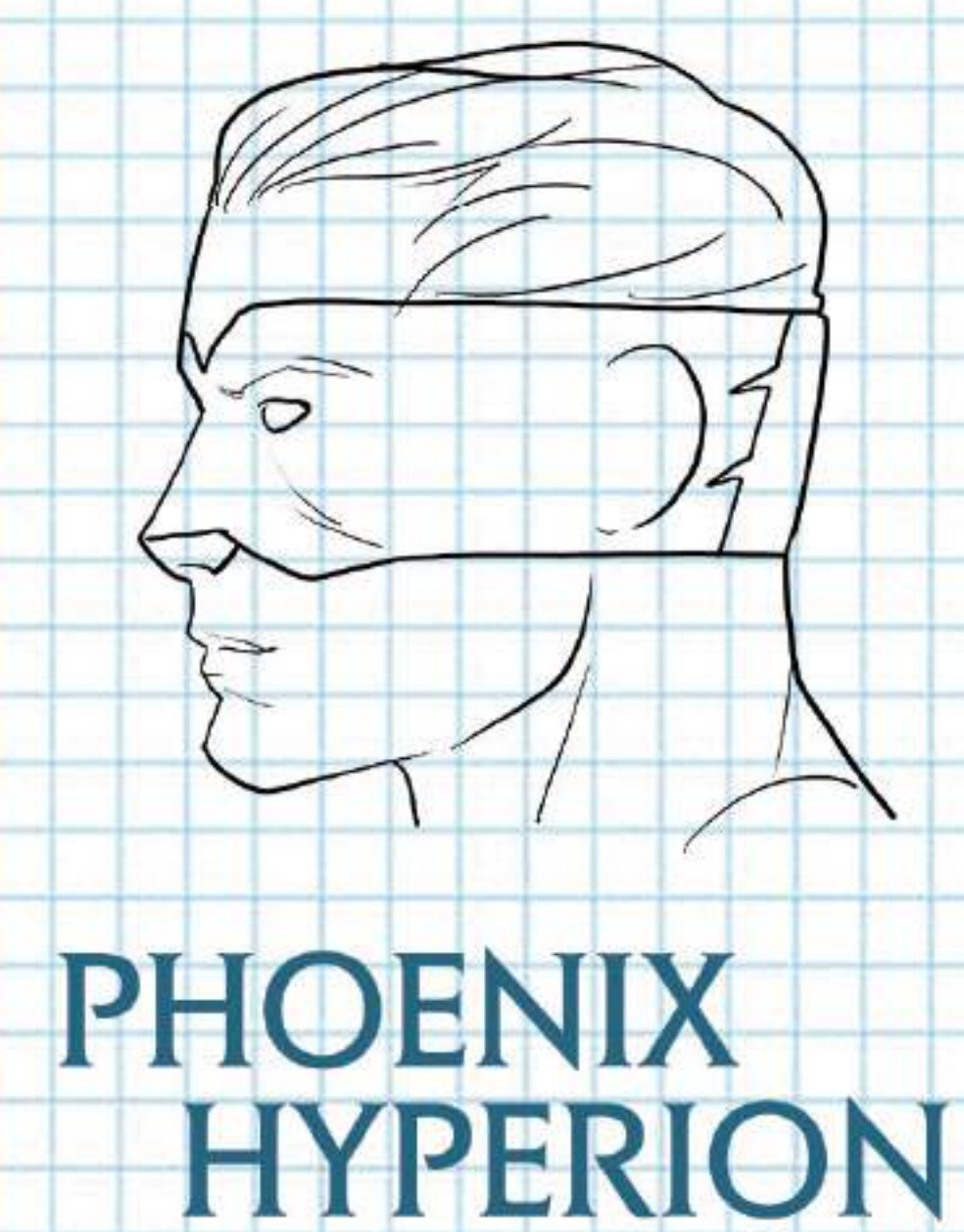
PHOENIX
NAMOR



PHOENIX
CAPTAIN
AMERICA



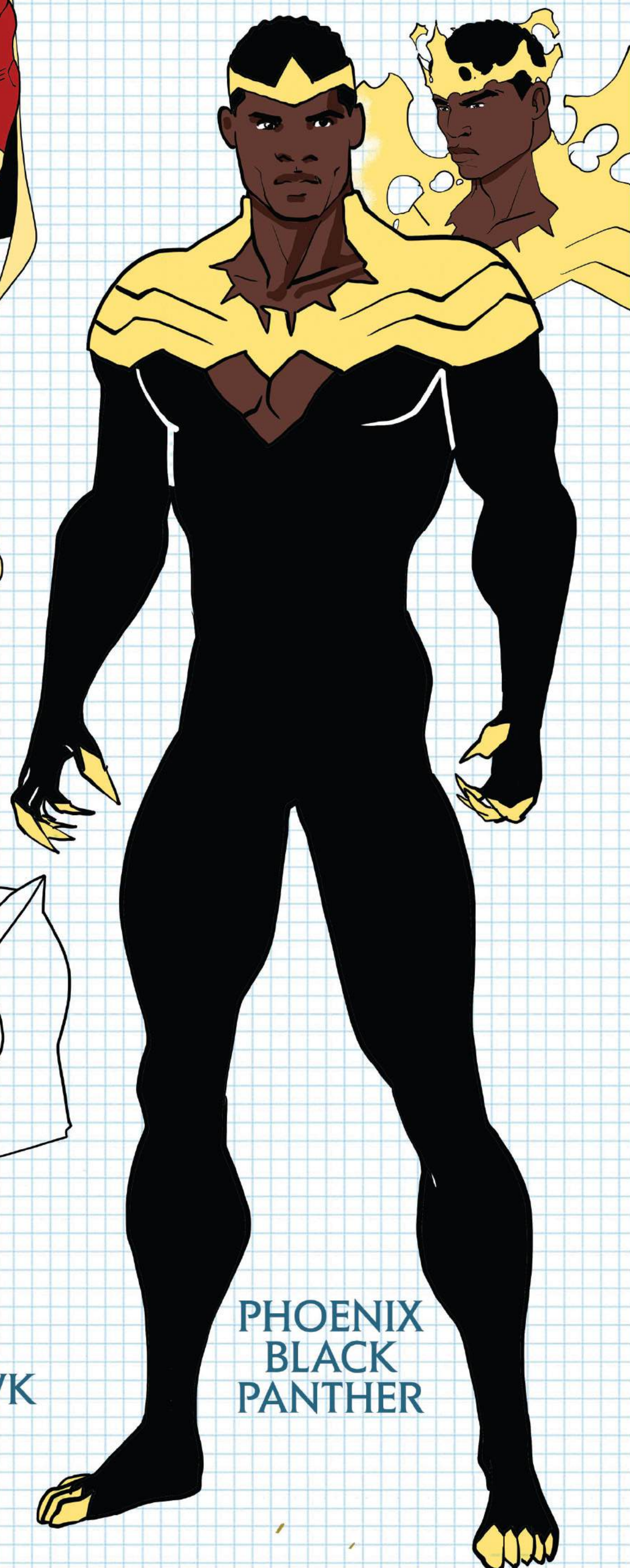
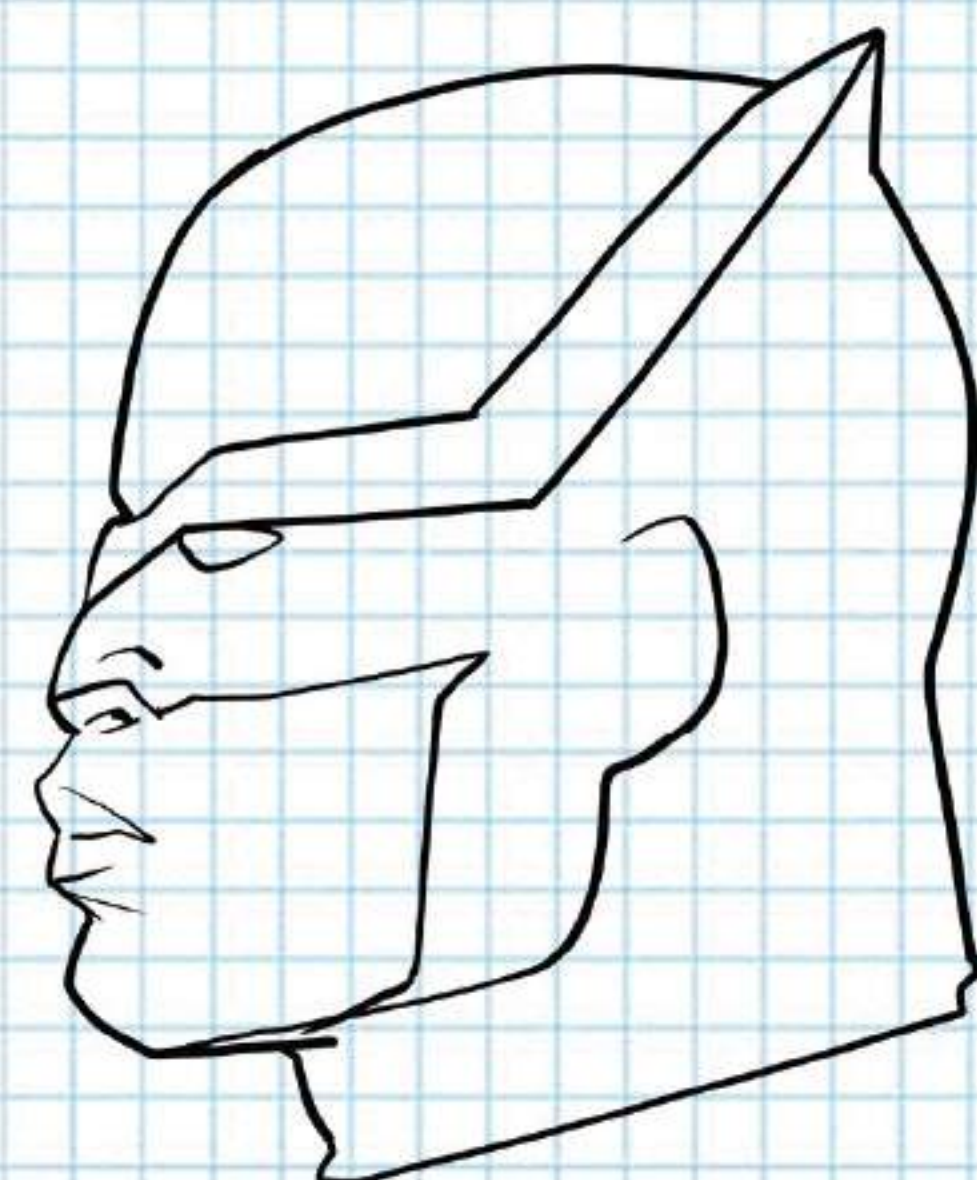
PHOENIX
WOLVERINE



PHOENIX
HYPERION



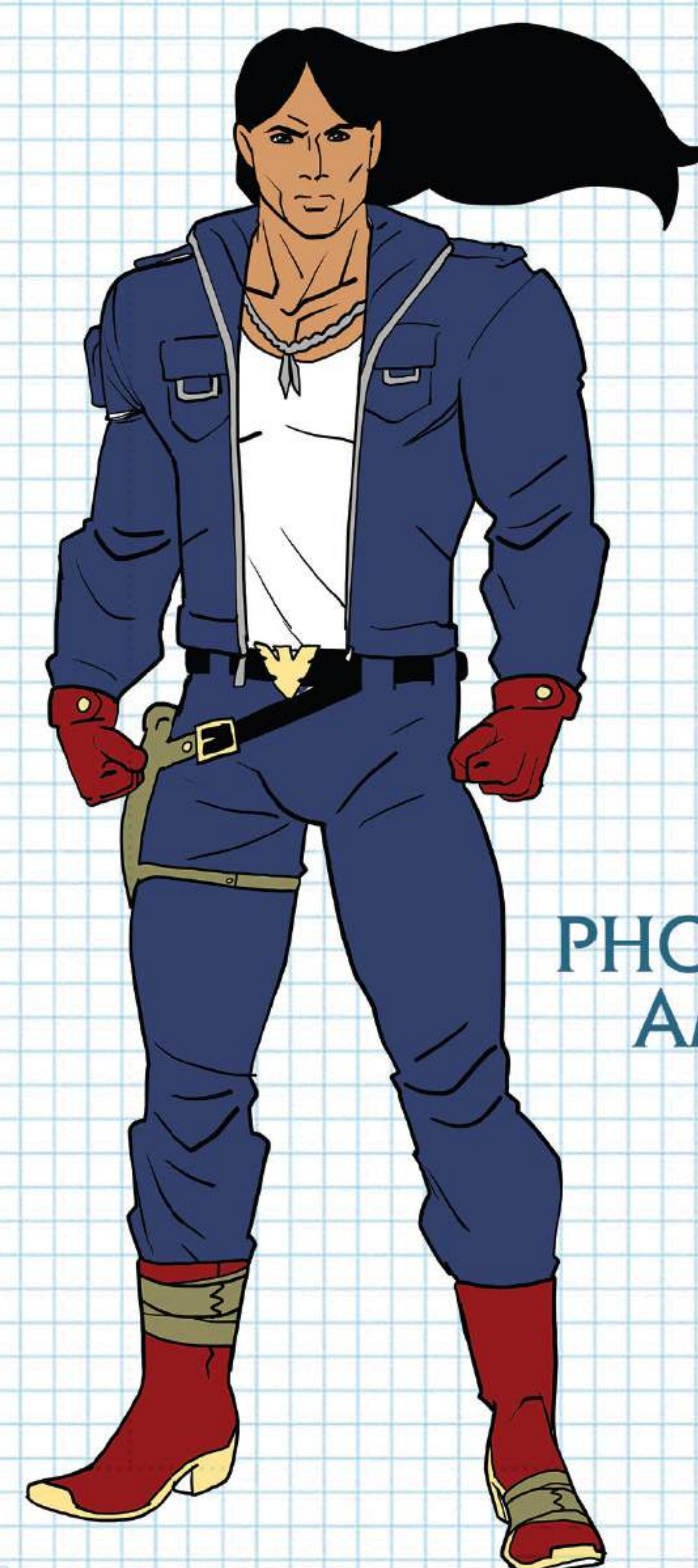
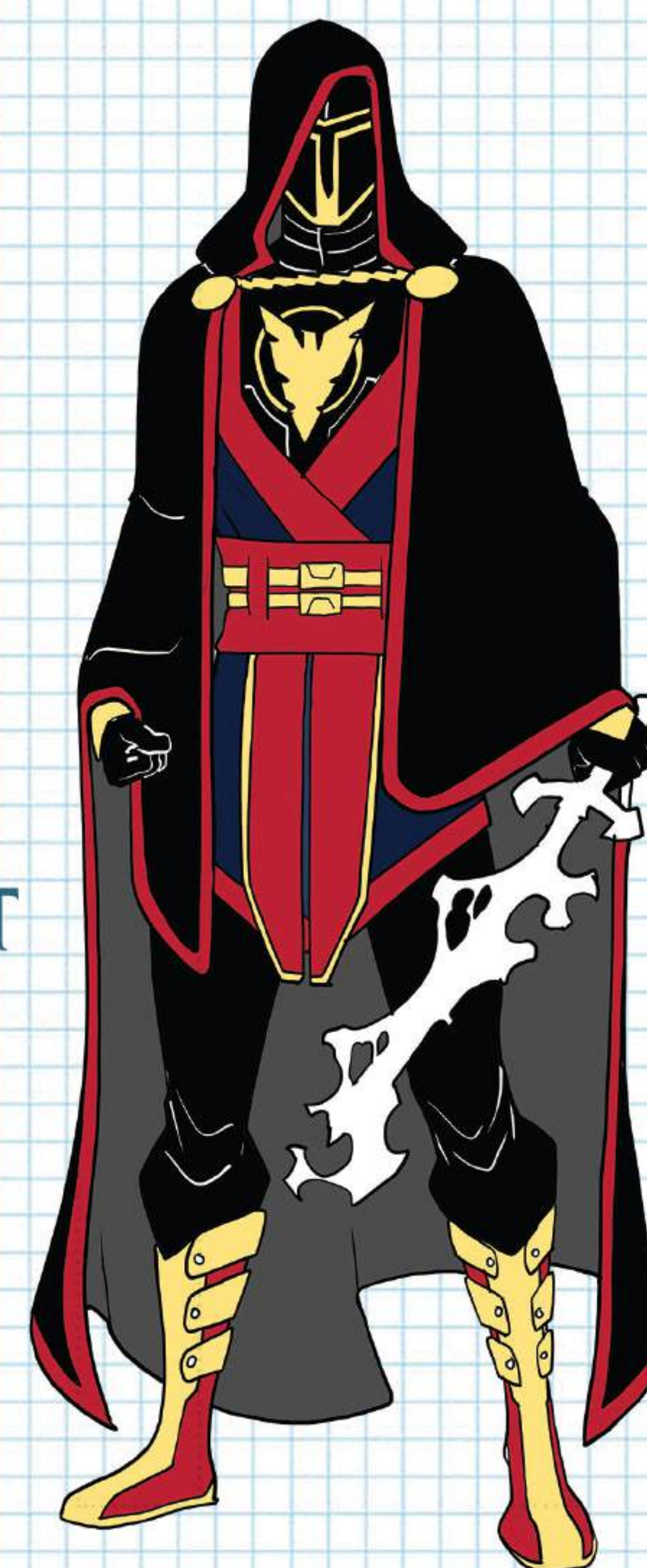
PHOENIX
NIGHTHAWK



PHOENIX
BLACK
PANTHER



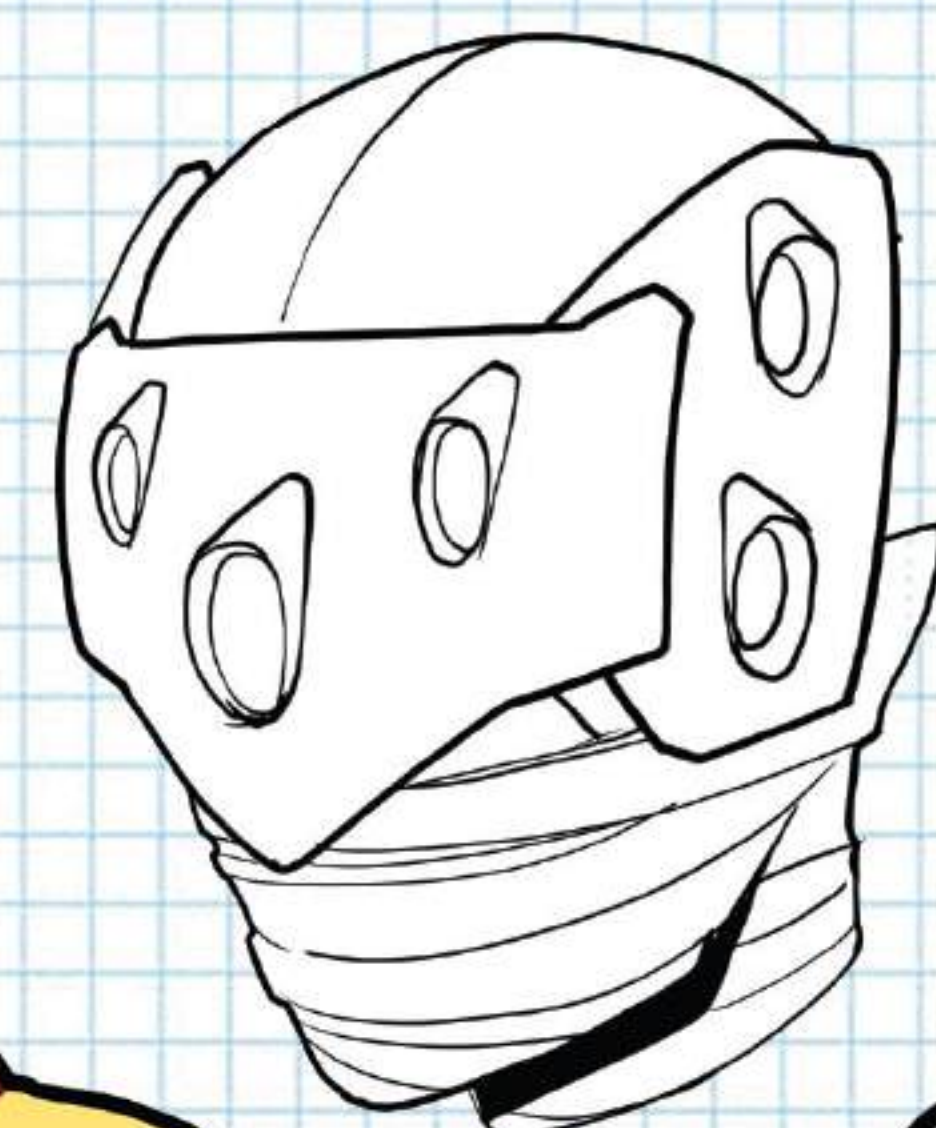
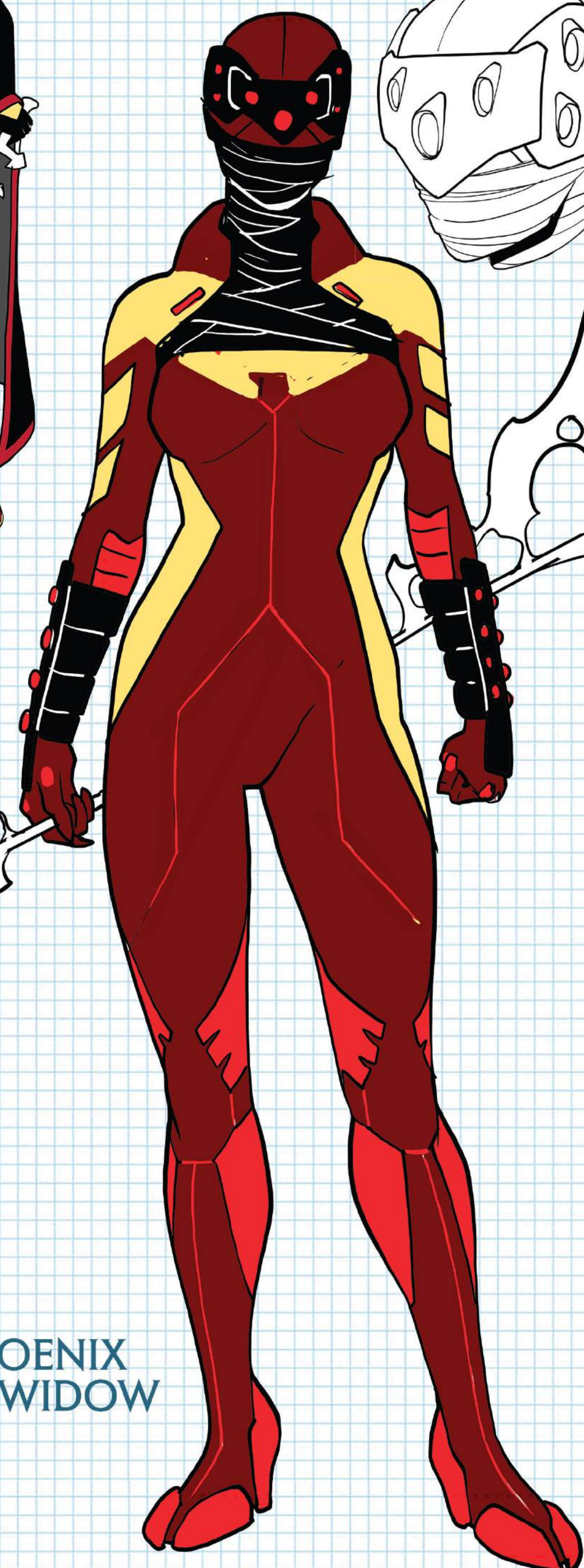
PHOENIX
BLACK KNIGHT



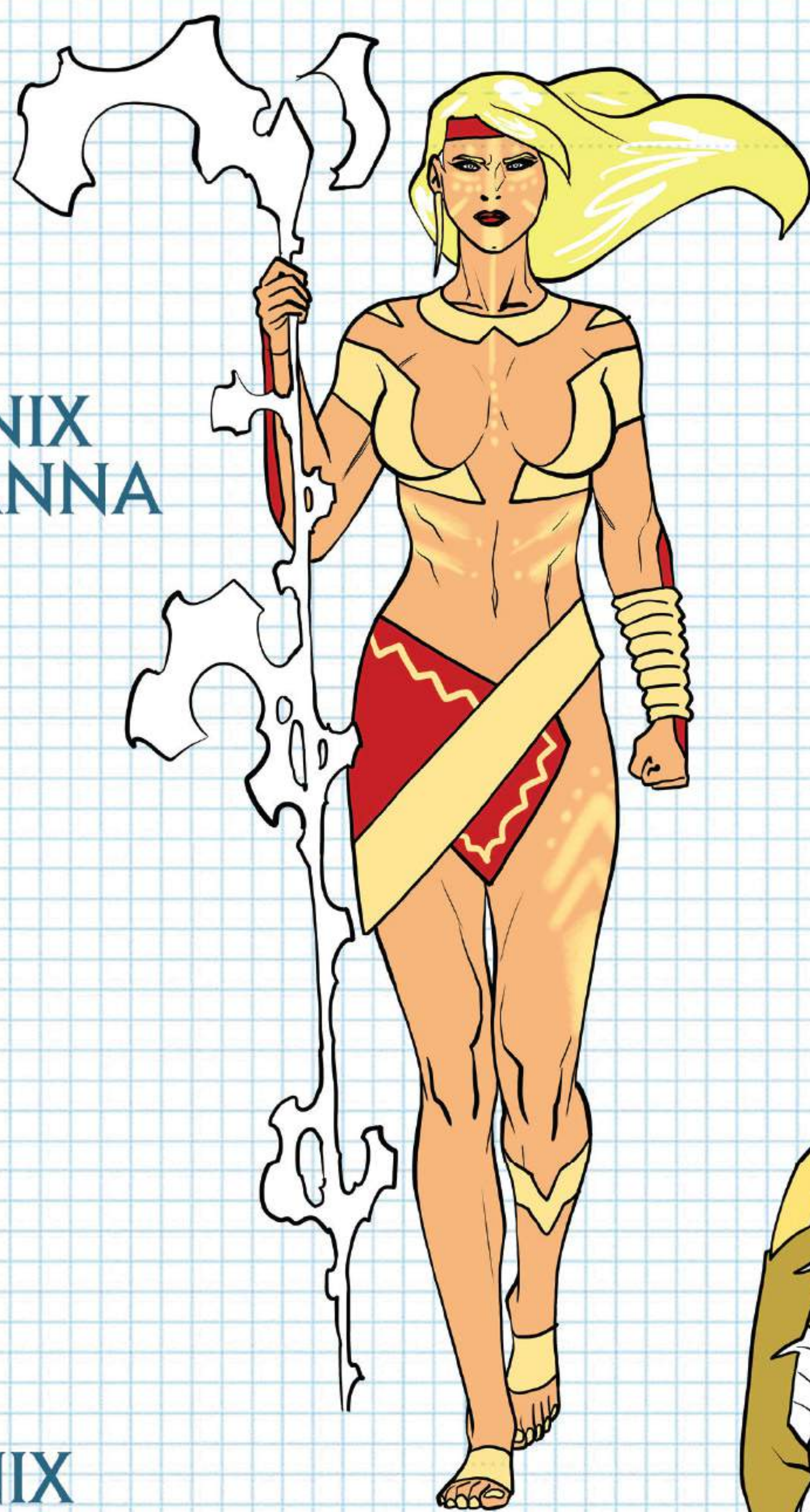
PHOENIX
AMERICAN
EAGLE



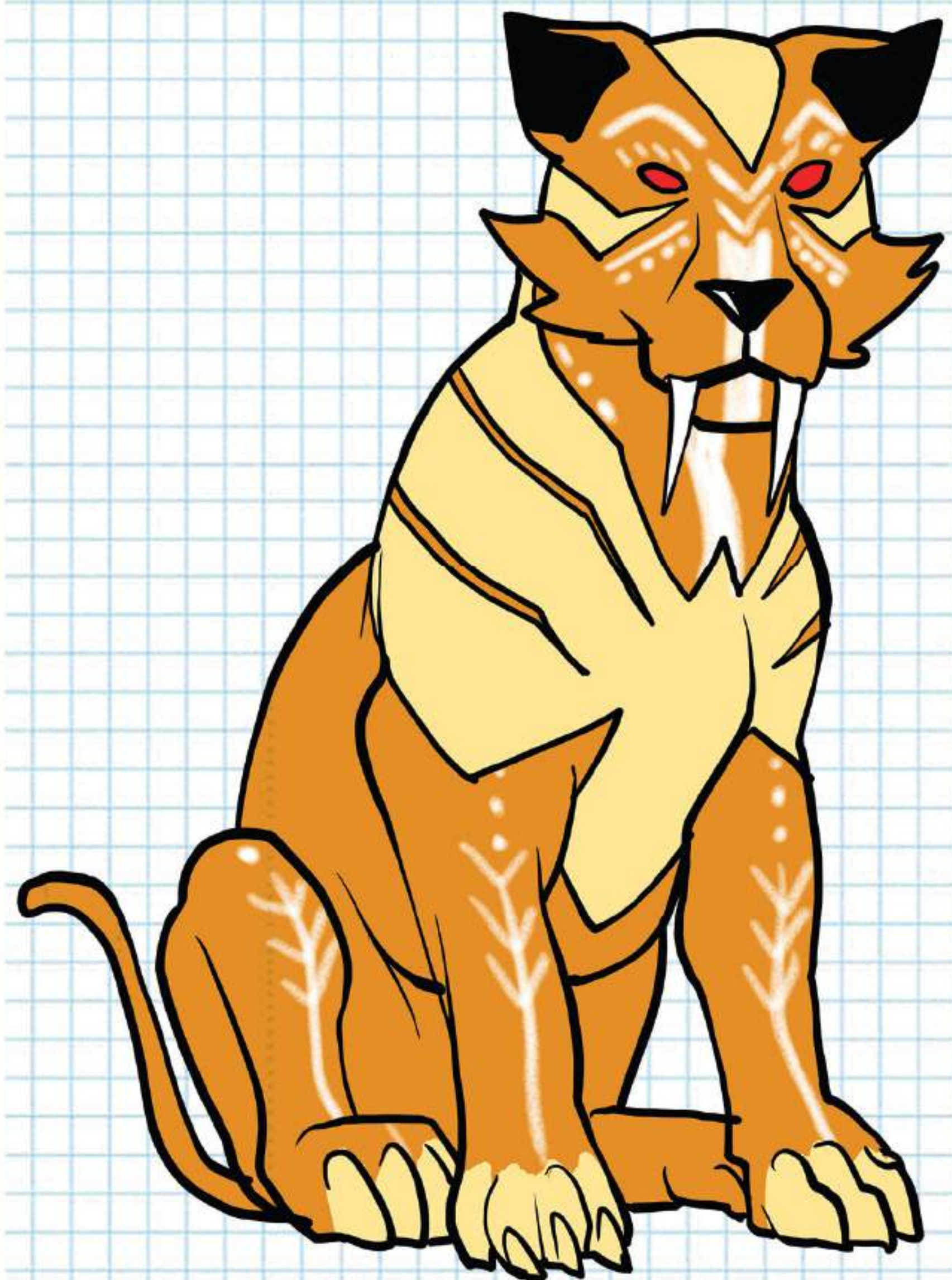
PHOENIX
RED WIDOW



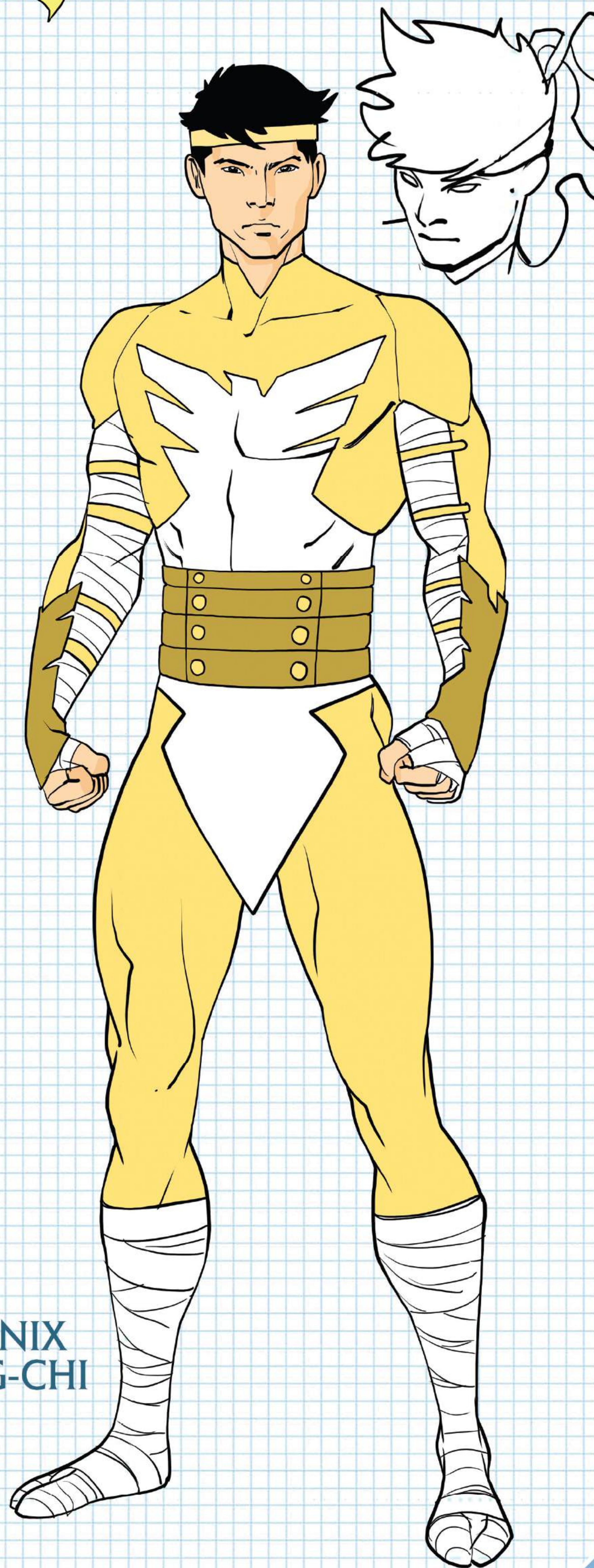
PHOENIX
SHANNA



PHOENIX
ZABU



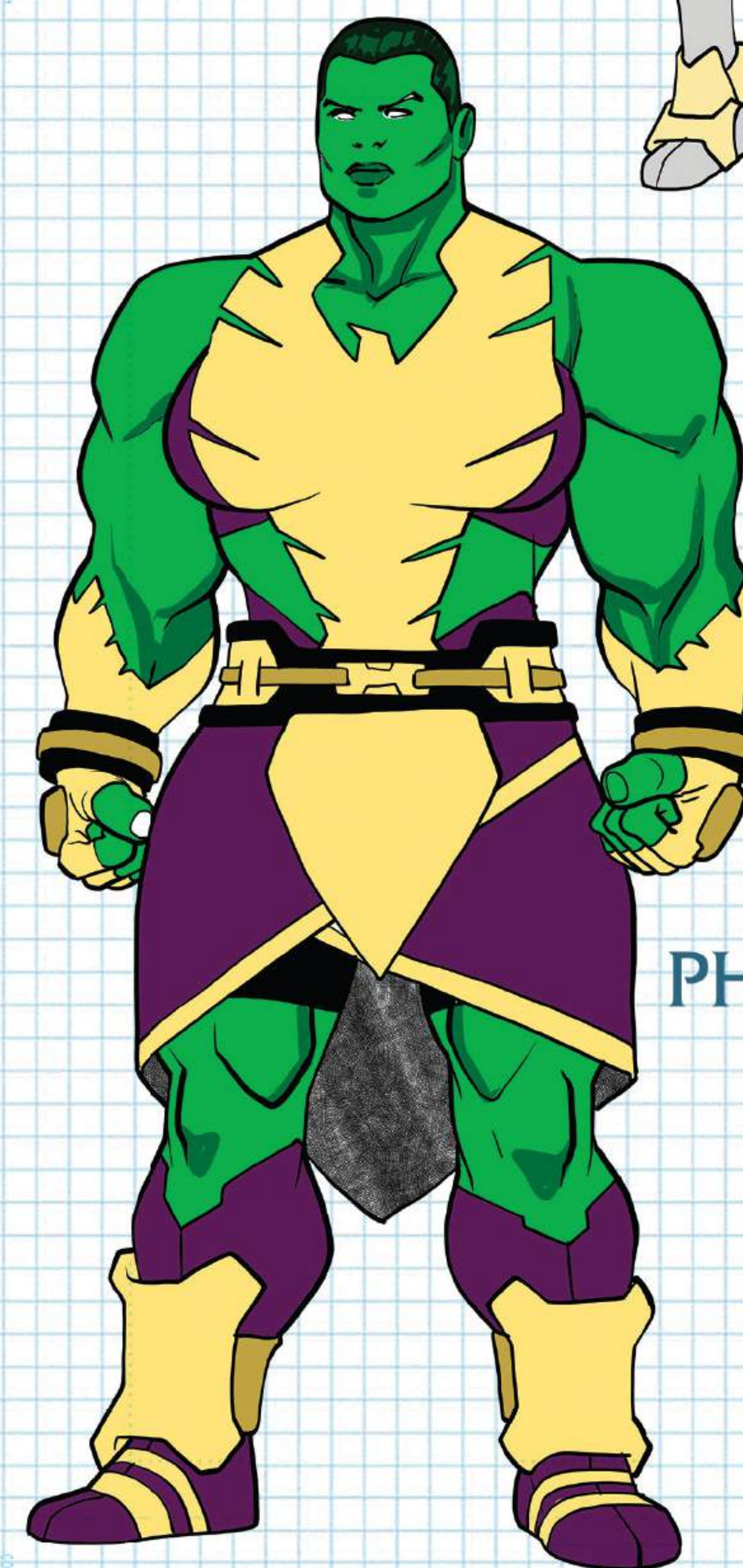
PHOENIX
SHANG-CHI



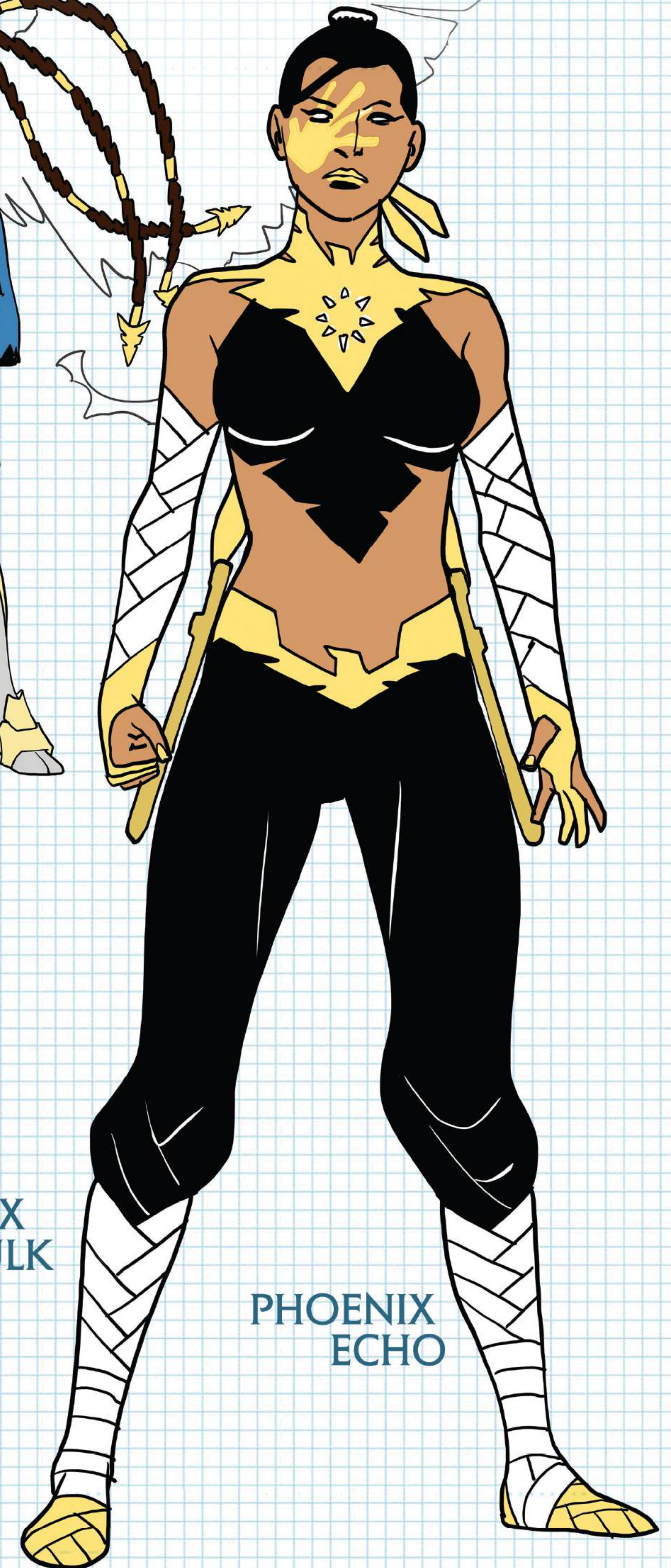
PHOENIX
JANE FOSTER



PHOENIX
HULK



PHOENIX
ECHO





DUSTIN WEAVER
40-44 CONNECTING VARIANTS



DUSTIN WEAVER
40-44 CONNECTING VARIANTS PENCILS



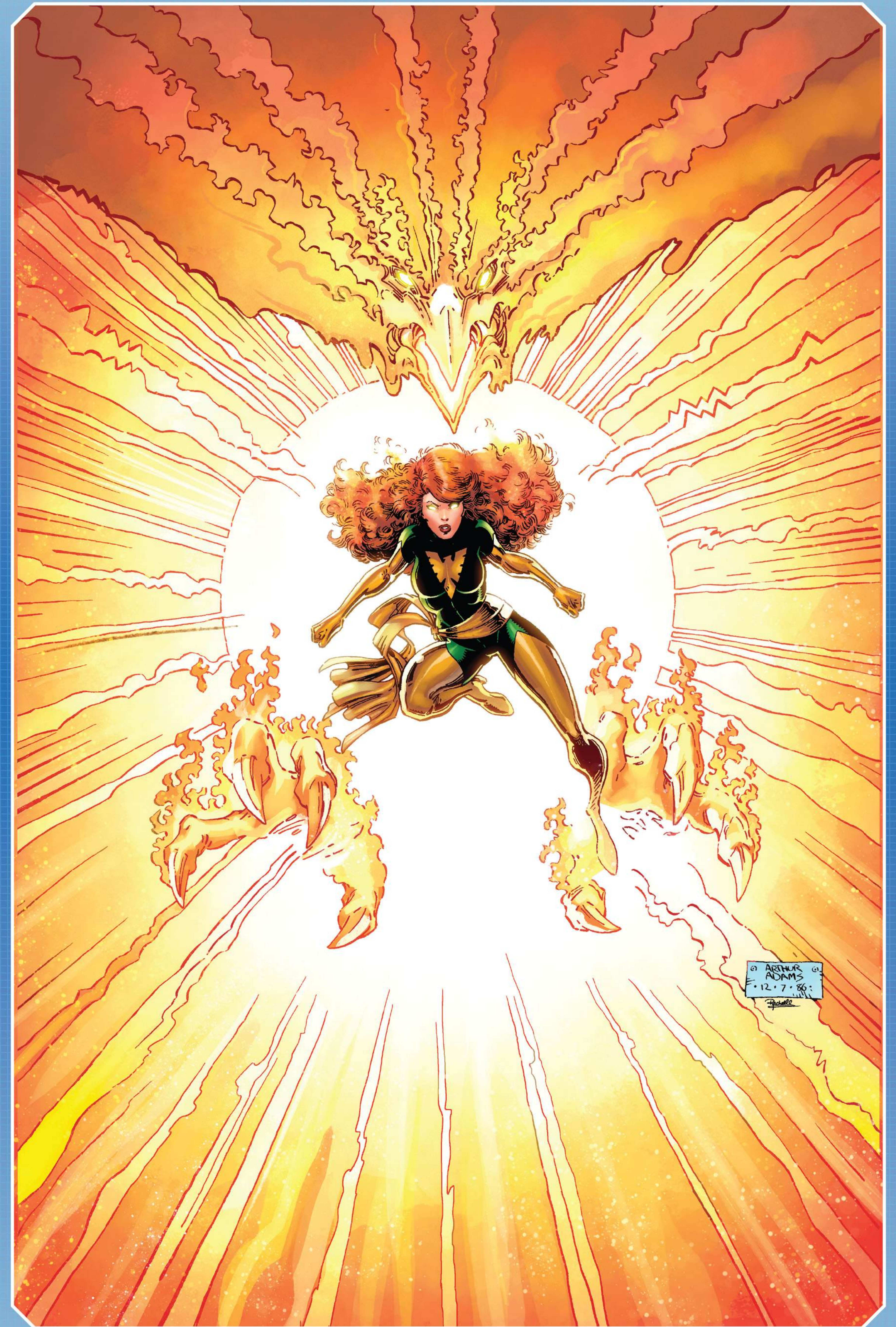
TAURIN CLARKE
40 VARIANT



JOSHUA "SWAY" SWABY
40 VARIANT



JOSHUA CASSARA & MATTHEW WILSON
40 STORMBREAKERS VARIANT



ARTHUR ADAMS & RACHELLE ROSENBERG
40 HIDDEN GEM VARIANT



ERNANDA SOUZA
42 BLACK HISTORY MONTH VARIANT



JEN BARTEL
43 WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH VARIANT



MICHAEL CHO
43 TWO-TONE VARIANT



PEACH MOMOKO
44 VARIANT



GREG TOCCHINI
39 KNULLIFIED VARIANT



CARLOS PACHECO, RAFAEL FONTERIZ & RACHELLE ROSENBERG
45 HEROES REBORN VARIANT

“The Phoenix is an entity of light and darkness... Aaron understands this and paints a truly illustrative series of events with a fresh take of the Phoenix Force.” — The Comic Book Dispatch

WHO WILL BE THE *ALL-NEW PHOENIX?!*

THE PLANET-BURNING COSMIC FIREBIRD known as the Phoenix Force has returned, and the Avengers are drawn into a globe-spanning battle for ultimate power! In the distant past of One Million B.C.E., one young girl’s only crime was being born with red hair, and her destiny will change human history forever! In the present, the Phoenix Force searches the globe for a new avatar — and many of Marvel’s most powerful heroes and villains are contenders! As the battle to wield the Phoenix grows ever bloodier and more desperate, Thor leads the Avengers in a fight to contain it. But the quest is complicated by the Thunder God’s mysterious connection to the cosmic firebird! Plus: Blade pays a dark price in the fight against the King in Black!



